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THE
MANŒUVRING MOTHER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE HISTORY OF A FLIRT.”

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE
MANŒUVRING MOTHER.

CHAPTER XII.

Sir Foster Kerrison's entrance into the great drawing-room at Wetheral was an epoch in its annals. It was the precursor of stirring matter. Lady Wetheral received him with great amenity of manner; and any other gentleman might have perceived a look of anxious care in her eyes. Sir Foster, however, saw nothing; he did not even observe that her ladyship was alone. Habit directed him to a seat in the direction of the lounging-chair, which stood in the boudoir, and when his hat was placed upon a table, there was nothing to interfere with his *dolce far niente*. Sir Foster sat down, tapping his boot and winking his eye, in happy ignorance of coming events.

Lady Wetheral allowed some little time to elapse in silence, ere she commenced proceedings; but, when Sir Foster had taken root, and looked steadily deposited for three hours at least, the case was gently opened. Lady Wetheral drew near, and seated herself opposite her neighbour.

“Sir Foster Kerrison, I beg your attention for a few moments.”

Sir Foster made no reply, but a rather quickened tapping of the boot assured her she was heard. Miss Kerrison had innocently enough supplied the key to her father’s meaning, and movements.

“Perhaps, my dear Sir Foster, you are somewhat surprised at the absence of Lucy and Clara.”

Sir Foster looked round the room, and smiled.

“Clara is not allowed to return again to your society, my dear Sir Foster, for very essential and painful reasons.” Lady Wetheral paused, but she might have continued *ad libitum* for hours: Sir Foster neither perceived the absence of his daughter and Clara, nor understood the drift of her remarks. Lady Wetheral’s quickness detected at once the obtuseness of her companion; she perceived the uselessness of

hints and sighs, and broken sentences, in the present instance. Tom Pynsent yielded at once to their influence, but Sir Foster required a *coup de main* to rouse his feelings and attention. Another line of conduct was therefore chosen.

“ Sir Foster Kerrison, you have behaved very ill to my daughter !”

“ God bless me !” cried Sir Foster, almost starting. “ Eh ! what ?”

“ If your intentions are not honourable, Sir Foster Kerrison, I, as a mother, demand a change of conduct on your part.”

“ Lucy ill, or any thing ?” demanded Sir Foster, in surprise.

“ *Miss Kerrison* is well,” replied Lady Wetheral, with emphasis.

“ Oh, umph !”

Sir Foster sank again comfortably into the arm-chair.

Provoking man ! Was there no way of chaining such a creature ? Her ladyship’s patience was inexhaustible. Perhaps a still more decided manner might effect the purpose. Lady Wetheral took a high tone.

“ Sir Foster Kerrison, the neighbourhood have reported you are addressing my daughter. I wish to know if you are aware of this report :

Miss Wetheral shall not be trifled with, Sir Foster!"

The tapping increased in velocity, and Sir Foster's eye winked with prodigious rapidity. Her ladyship became gradually more resolute and parental.

"If my child is to be made wretched, Sir Foster Kerrison, a mother's offended heart will urge its claims to be heard, and her lips will express its horror at such baseness. She will tell you how detestably wicked it is to come, day after day, and sit hours, with an innocent, trusting girl, who fondly believes there is truth and honour in your soul. No parent can mistake the aim of your visits, Sir Foster, but I will know if it is meant in honour. I will hear no base apologies, no wicked evasions — is my daughter to be Lady Kerrison, or is she to pine away in solitary, unrequited attachment? Is Miss Wetheral to become pointed at as a refused and melancholy picture of disappointed love; or is my lovely Clara to be your happy, affectionate wife, Sir Foster Kerrison?" The lady's voice sounded agitated and heart-broken at the conclusion of her speech.

Sir Foster looked bewildered. He heard the epithets "base" and "wicked," without com-

prehending their purport, or having a connecting idea of the sentences which fell from Lady Wetheral's lips with such voluble earnestness. He only heard distinctly the concluding words, "Is my lovely Clara to be your happy, affectionate wife, Sir Foster?" and he replied with quiet nonchalance,

"If you please—oh yes—eh, what?"

Lady Wetheral smiled very complacently as she rose from her seat.

"You have made me very happy, by proposing for my Clara, dear Sir Foster, and we will now return into the boudoir."

Lady Wetheral talked all the way from the drawing-room into her boudoir, while Sir Foster followed, humming and staring, perfectly aware something had happened, yet not quite awake to its nature.

"I am delighted our little society is not to be broken up, my dear Sir Foster: *now*, you know, every thing will continue in its own charming routine—you will be in your arm-chair now every day, as a thing of course. Sit down, dear Sir Foster; I will open this window; the spring flowers are early and delicious this season. I perceive Lucy and Clara walking in the garden. Ah, I see you have

taken possession of your old seat, dear Sir Foster."

Miss Kerrison and Clara were quickly at the door of the boudoir. Clara had seen the signal; the window was at last thrown open.

"Lucy, Lucy, your father is come; let us return to the house," she cried, hastily retracing her steps. Lucy followed instinctively.

"Lucy Kerrison," said Lady Wetheral, taking her hand the moment she appeared, "I have very extraordinary news for you! how are you inclined to receive a mother-in-law, my dear love!"

"Are *you* going to marry papa?" asked Lucy Kerrison, in extremity of surprise.

"No, my love; Sir John is in excellent health in his study," replied her ladyship, smiling.

"Oh yes, how foolish! I forgot; but I fancied you in earnest, and I could only think of yourself, Lady Wetheral. Papa, are you going to be married? Oh, don't marry! pray, don't marry, papa, and I will return to Ripley with you: but it's only a joke, is it papa?" and poor Lucy Kerrison became very pale.

"My dear love, you really tremble; but I assure you there is no need of any alarm. You will not fear Clara as a new relation: you will lead a very easy life with Clara, my dear Lucy!

Your papa has proposed for Clara, my dear young friend. Are you sorry?"

Lucy Kerrison seated herself in perfect silence and astonishment. Lady Wetheral resumed.

"Clara, my love, Sir Foster has decided upon taking away my companion: he has asked for you to ornament and enliven Ripley, my love. How can I refuse Sir Foster Kerrison; and yet how can I part with my only child, my only companion, since the marriage of Mrs. Tom Pynsent and Lady Ennismore!"

Miss Kerrison fixed her gaze upon Clara and her father alternately, but she did not speak: her ideas were too confused to admit of speech, and she watched in stupid amazement the scene that was passing before her. Lady Wetheral approached Sir Foster, leading Clara.

"Rise, man of happy fortunes, and receive the boon I tender to you according to your wishes. Make my child happy, and I must reluctantly consider myself fortunate in giving her to a good, indulgent man, such as Sir Foster Kerrison."

Sir Foster was noted for taciturnity, and inveterate absence of mind, in society; but he was not an absolute fool, and he was a great admirer of beauty. He had a strong suspicion in his

mind that a young lady was on the point of being forced upon him ; but he hated altercation, and the lady was young and particularly handsome ; besides, Lady Wetheral was insisting upon it, he had made proposals, and it was useless to contend. Sir Foster therefore rose and bowed very gallantly — considering it was Sir Foster ; and that bow recognised and authorised the whole affair. Lady Wetheral's care was ended upon Clara's matrimonial prospects.

Miss Kerrison at length found words to express her deep surprise, and indeed pleasure, considering her father really meant to marry ; but she confessed the thing was a mystery to her ; she had seen no attention on her father's part to Clara—never ! As to his sitting three hours every day at Wetheral, that was nothing—he did so at many places. She never saw any liking on Clara's part either—altogether, it was the oddest piece of courtship she had ever seen or read of.

Sir Foster having bowed and reseated himself, heard all his daughter's remarks in silence. He smiled and tapped his boot fast, which always denoted concurrence, or was a symptom of pleasure as far as it went ; therefore, Miss Kerrison continued.

“I am sure, papa, you only visit here as you did at Hatton and Lidham, and in Shrewsbury; you never made love to Miss Wycherly or Miss Spottiswoode; did you? And you never spoke to, or looked at Clara that I could see? I cannot make it all out! I am sure, Clara, you would have mentioned it to me if you had liked papa, or if you thought papa liked you. I never shall understand it. Are you going to marry soon, papa?”

“All in good time, my dear Lucy,” replied Lady Wetheral, pleased with the admirable issue of her scheme; “there are many little things to be done before Clara can be given up to you. You, my dear Lucy, must be my daughter when Clara goes to Ripley; you must stay with me then, at poor lonely Wetheral.”

“My dear Lady Wetheral, I will often come to see you, but I am sure Clara will require my assistance some time at Ripley. You don’t know how particular papa is in eating! Clara will be some time finding out what papa likes, and till then!—oh, Clara, till then!” Miss Kerison lifted up her hands and eyes. Sir Foster only smiled at his daughter’s insinuation; he never offered to excuse or remove the implied hint from the minds of his fair one, or her

mother. Miss Kerrison proceeded with lively energy,—

“Oh, Clara, I am very glad you mean to marry papa, though I never shall understand how it was brought about. I shall be released from managing the establishment, which I do not like. I hope you will get money from papa for every thing; I can assure you I had dreadful work to squeeze out a few pounds, and the fish-monger is my abhorrence: papa and the fish-monger have pretty scenes together!”

Sir Foster Kerrison chuckled, and winked his eye with nervous rapidity.

“Yes, papa, you may laugh, but the fish-monger did not. Do you know, Clara, papa kicked the man and his basket of soles and salmon out of the kitchen, and down the drive at Ripley.”

Another chuckle betrayed the delight Sir Foster felt at the recollection of his prowess. Lady Wetheral however thought it politic to close the subject.

“Tradespeople are very tiresome, my dear Lucy, and it requires a particular degree of patience to deal with itinerant fish-people. I don't wonder at your poor father losing temper. One moment, my love, if you please.”

She rose and quitted the boudoir, followed by Miss Kerrison, who accompanied her to the breakfast-room. Her ladyship then expressed and explained her wishes.

“My dear Lucy, it was time to have mercy upon your father and his bride elect, therefore I begged you to withdraw. They must have a *tête-à-tête*, poor things, to explain their feelings and inquire into each other’s habits and tastes. And now, my love, since events have unfolded themselves so rapidly this morning, I must counsel and advise with you. I think it prudent that you should return to Ripley this morning, Lucy; therefore the carriage shall be at your service in two hours.” Tears rushed into Lucy Kerrison’s eyes.

“You know, my dear love, a separation *now* is merely a few hours’ absence; something more to smile at than weep over — perhaps a day or two, not more. You are aware of your good father’s infirmity, Lucy; and I trust to your good sense and kindness to remind him occasionally of his engagement; you understand me, my love.”

“Yes, but papa forgets so sadly. After all, he may go off, and sit three hours at Lidham again; and how can I detain him, Lady Wetheral?”

“Circumstances are very different, my love ! Yet I do not say Sir Foster may not require a little prompting *sometimes* ; his absence of mind is certainly a disease : perhaps, if you withheld his cane, or concealed his coat — Pelham, you know, might be let into the secret, to watch his master ; or, if you sent a message by him, to freshen his recollection ; but you will do every thing well, I am sure, my love ; — no one more *au fait* and clever than Lucy Kerrison.”

Thus flattered and counselled, Miss Kerrison undertook to watch her father’s whereabouts, and Pelham was to be instructed to turn his master’s thoughts every morning to his regular ride towards Wetheral. With these “advices” upon her mind, poor Lucy was consigned to the carriage, bearing with her many delightful compliments and invitations to consider Wetheral her second home—many pleasing anticipations of the future —and much triumph that another was going to undertake the management of Ripley, her father’s violence, and the frightful contests between himself and the fishmonger.

Clara assured her mother, when Sir Foster had departed, “that though the *tête-à-tête* had not been a chatty affair, yet such taciturnity proved a very quiet, mild character, which would suit

her own warmth of temper. She was very content to be Lady Kerrison, and have Lucy for a companion. Sir Foster loved quiet, therefore he would not interfere with her tastes, or quarrel with her actions. She and Lucy would enjoy themselves, and perhaps be a great deal from home." Lady Wetheral quite acquiesced in Clara's prognostics; there was only one little affair to get over, and *that* would soften by time and reason, she trusted.

"I mean your father's objection, my love; I dare say he will be horrified at first, because he fancies Sir Foster a little warm in his temper."

"I don't believe he is warm-tempered," replied Clara, haughtily. "If I don't complain, no one need make any objection."

"Exactly so, my love; who can possibly judge of another's tastes? What I consider impetuous, another person may think simply vivacious, and so on. I think, my love, we will not say any thing to your father just now; suppose we allow the subject to remain in abeyance for a few days? Sir John has such very narrow views of worldly advantages; such peculiarly contracted notions upon the luxuries of life."

Clara differed from Lady Wetheral. She considered it better sense to state the circumstance

at once to her father, since he must become a principal in the affair sooner or later. She would herself inform him of Sir Foster's proposal, and if his objections were not to be reasoned with, she must act for herself.

Such was Clara's determination, and such the intrepidity of her temper at sixteen years of age. Ungovernable in feeling, and haughty in disposition, she held powerful sway over her mother's mind; but it was yet to be proved whether her father also would yield to her domineering and intractable spirit. Lady Wetheral shrunk from the combat which must ensue between parental authority and filial disobedience; it would be a combat far surpassing the skirmish which preceded Lady Ennismore's engagement, for her husband had seen the error of his frequent compliance with her wishes, and his commands had been peremptory in the matter of Sir Foster Kerrison.

Clara's high spirit would not stoop to commit her mother, by acknowledging her active management in procuring the proposal, but it might transpire that she had a deep share in its contrivance; and she dreaded the calm bitterness of her husband's reproaches. Clara's temper was equal to a thousand storms, and a thousand un-

toward events: "Clara therefore must fight her own battle; she was fully equipped for the war of words which must ensue, and her lofty spirit scorned the alarms which subjugated meaner and more timid minds." Clara only smiled in contempt at her mother's reasoning.

Sir John inquired at dinner what had become of his young and agreeable friend Miss Kerrison, who had so suddenly disappeared. His lady's reply was perfectly satisfactory, and precluded all further remark: "Miss Kerrison had been summoned home by Sir Foster." The dinner passed in harmony, and on Sir John's part, with more than his usual vivacity. He seemed to feel relieved by the absence of all associations connected with Ripley. How little did he anticipate the blow which awaited the withdrawal of the servants, to fall heavily upon his heart!

Clara opened her subject with the indifference of a person who had quite made up their mind to all consequences, and dared every opposition; she raised her wine-glass to sip its contents with consummate nonchalance, and coolly commenced her disclosure.

"Papa, I think it right to inform you of any material step which I may take, therefore I beg to tell you I have accepted Sir Foster Kerrison."

Sir John appeared for a moment stunned. Clara resumed—

“Sir Foster Kerrison pleases me; and, though my tastes may clash with others, I alone am judge of what will make me happy; therefore, I have resolved to marry Sir Foster, papa.”

Sir John’s eyes were fixed upon his lady’s face in silence. She read their expression, and shrunk under its deep meaning. A flood of tears fortunately relieved the painful sense of self-upbraiding, and proved a fruitful theme by which to evade the subject so galling to her husband’s mind.

“Really, Sir John, I am so enfeebled by constant flurry of mind, and my poor dear girls’ marriages, that a word or a look throws me into fits of nervousness. I cannot imagine why you should stare at me in that odd way, when I never could endure a fixed gaze; particularly when my spirits are low, and my nerves so shaken.”

“Clara,” said her father, calmly, “what events have led to your acceptance of Sir Foster? when did you accept him, and where have you met him since your sisters’ nuptials? Tell me candidly how all this has happened.”

“Oh! yes, certainly, papa. Sir Foster has been visiting me here some time.”

“I never saw him, or heard of the visit, Clara,” replied Sir John, mildly.

“You are always in your study, papa. People seldom ask for you now,” was Clara’s observation, as she helped herself to preserved strawberries with perfect coolness of manner.

“Gertrude,” said Sir John, “you have concealed all this from me, and disobeyed my strong injunctions to allow no intimacy with Sir Foster Kerrison. Since my wife persists in opposing me, I cannot be surprised at a child defying me.”

“I never asked Sir Foster to Wetheral,” faltered the lady; “his visits were not the consequences of any invitation from me; you have never seen him here, my love: I never ventured to ask him to dinner: I never held out an inducement to attract him here. It has been Sir Foster’s own act and deed to propose to my daughter; and his calling occasionally was very natural, while Lucy staid with us. You brought him in yourself one day; but really all this violent altercation destroys my nerves, and undermines my health.” Lady Wetheral sunk back in her chair, closed her eyes, and applied her vinaigrette.

Sir John was silent for some moments, as if his thoughts and feelings were too powerful to

produce utterance. Clara did not, or would not, perceive his emotion ; she continued eating her biscuit and strawberries with calm unconcern, not at all disconcerted by the deep silence which followed her mother's speech. Sir John at length rose, and, with great solemnity of tone and manner, addressed his youngest daughter, who was seated a silent spectator of the whole scene.

“Chrystal, it is time for me to take some steps towards removing you from such examples. I shall accompany you to Brierly to-morrow, and place you, for the present, under Boscawen's care. He will take charge of you till I can claim you in peace. When I have deposited you in safety, I shall remove from Wetheral for ever. Your mother and sister will accompany me into Scotland, as I shall reside in future at Fairlee.”

Nothing could exceed Lady Wetheral's terror at these words, spoken so calmly and so decidedly. She rushed towards her husband, and seized his arm with nervous trepidation.

“Don't go into Scotland, John ! oh, don't go there, to horrid Fairlee ! I shall die there — no, no ; say you will not take me from Wetheral, and I will promise any thing, John !” Her ladyship's alarm became very powerful, and she sank to the ground. Christobelle would have flowu

to the bell to summon Thompson, but her father forbade the action; he begged that such scenes might never be disclosed to the eyes of the household. He raised her, and laid her on a sofa, but it was some time ere her senses returned. She wandered evidently for some hours in her conversation, and was at length placed in bed, under the influence of a powerful narcotic. Christobelle watched by her as she slept.

Sir John Wetheral felt all this most painfully; but he was now awake to the weakness of his conduct in placing such implicit confidence in his lady's system of education; he felt too late how indolently he had succumbed to her tears and reproaches against his own better judgment, even to the sacrifice of Julia; and now he was resolved to save Clara, at the risk of sacrificing for ever all future hopes of domestic felicity. Her ladyship's fearful apprehensions of Fairlee threatened an illness: but Sir John was firmly resolved to quit Shropshire; to leave at once the scene of deception which irritated his mind; to save, if possible, the fate which awaited Clara, should her evil genius give her into the power of Sir Foster Kerrison.

Christobelle was still watching in her mother's room, when she opened her eyes, and faintly

called for Thompson. Christobelle did not reply, but walked softly to the side of her bed, to inquire how she felt after her long sleep. Her eyes were heavy, for she closed them as she spoke.

“Is that you, Thompson? I have had such horrible dreams: your master is going into Scotland, and poor Miss Clara will be taken away from Sir Foster, after all my trouble.”

“It is me, mamma,” whispered Christobelle.

“Well, well,” replied her mother, petulantly, “never mind who it is, you are equally included in this dreadful Fairlee business. I shall never live to reach Scotland: the dullness of the place —no neighbourhood—all old married men—not a match there fit for Clara —altogether it will kill me.”

A silence of some moments ensued, and she spoke again in low complaining tones.

“Your poor father’s violence has made me seriously ill, Bell, and he must lay my death at his own door. Sir Foster has been extremely ill used, and all the neighbourhood will think so, after his proposal being accepted, and his attachment made so public! My poor child Clara! it is very cruel by her, and the affair has broken my heart.”

There was again a pause, so continued, that Christobelle believed her mother slept; at last she heard her name pronounced.

“Bell.”

“Yes, mamma, I am close to you.”

“Perhaps, Bell, as you have influence with your father, you can find out his intentions with respect to Sir Foster. I can’t think he would break off such a match, but I am too unwell to enter upon the subject with him now. Go down, Bell, and manage your father, as I used to do, only bring me some intelligence.”

“Shall I ask the question for you, mamma?”

“Don’t be stupid, Bell; ask questions? Nonsense! You will never get the truth from man by a direct question, foolish child. You know what I mean; now go and glean his intentions with cleverness; it will be practice for you; there, no reply, Bell; no sentimentality; I detest it!”

Christobelle left the room, not quite comprehending her mother’s words. She could not understand the “gleaning,” neither did she know the meaning of the word “sentimentality,” but she went to her father’s study, and found him in his arm-chair, the candles standing before him unsnuffed. It was nearly twelve o’clock when

she entered. Her father held out his hand, and drew her to him.

“You are still up, my child, and it is very late.”

She told him her mother had slept long, and was very anxious to know whether he really intended to quit Wetheral.

“Your mamma sent you to inquire, my love?”

She hesitated. “No, papa, not to inquire; mamma forbade my asking questions.”

“What *were* you to do, then, Chrystal, since your mother wished to know my sentiments?”

Christobelle hesitated again. She was not prepared for this close investigation.

“Chrystal, whenever you speak, let it be strictly in truth, and with open-heartedness; God and your father, my child, hate insincerity, and untrue lips; speak without fear, and without evasion. What is this all about?”

Christobelle became alarmed at her father's grave observation, and lost all presence of mind; she repeated at once her mother's injunction.

“Papa, I was told to glean your intentions, without sentimentality, that was all; only I don't know what ‘glean’ means.”

“Go to bed, now, my dear child, and I will visit your mother,” said her father, in a melan-

choly tone of voice, which surprised her. "You and I have a journey before us, Chrystal; the day after to-morrow we shall set out for Brierly; you will be useful to Isabel, and improved by Boscawen's society and tastes. Good night, and go to your bed, my love."

She went to her room, and slept soundly, innocent of wrong, and ignorant of the scene which took place in her mother's room, in consequence of her unfortunate disclosure. Christobelle was summoned to Lady Wetheral's bed-side after breakfast; Clara was seated reading near the window, and a small table covered with essence-bottles told her at a glance there had been strife. Christobelle was accosted with much irony.

"Peacemakers are desirable people, Bell, and, doubtless, your heart is enjoying the harmony you have created; pray advance, and behold your delightful work. Am I quite as miserable as you wish, Christobelle? or have you any little poisoned arrow to apply, by way of completing my distress? Pray do me the honour to inform me what my next annoyance shall be!"

Christobelle stood in astonishment; her mother was very seldom bitter in her remarks.

"I suppose you are not aware you have procured the dismissal of Sir Foster Kerrison, and

may, probably, be the cause of your sister taking strong steps to assert herself. I suppose you are not aware you have made her and myself wretched, by your stupid matter of fact !”

Lady Wetheral laid down her salts bottle, and took up the vinaigrette ; Christobelle could only weep, and plead ignorance of all intention of offending.

“ Well, there’s no help, now,” continued her mother, changing her tone, and resuming the language of complaint. “ You have done mischief, and you must endeavour to repair it. Your father intends to see Sir Foster to-day, and I am too ill to interfere ; he will be violent, I dare say, for he has quite changed his nature, and his violence to me lately has been extraordinary ; I know he will forget himself, and offend Sir Foster. Now, Bell, you must manage to place a slip of paper in Sir Foster’s hand as he leaves the room, and do not make such mistakes as you generally contrive to do with your horrible matter of fact ways.”

“ There is no occasion for any slip of paper,” observed Clara, without raising her eyes from the book she held before her.

“ My dear Clara, yes !” said her mother, in an earnest tone.

“I choose to manage my own affairs,” was Clara’s quiet reply.

“But, my love, my dear Clara, remember Sir Foster’s wretched memory! he requires some management!”

“I shall attend to all that is necessary,” replied Clara.

“Well, my love, I ask no questions; indeed, I have no wish to interfere; I have done all *I* could do, in bringing Sir Foster to propose, and you must guard your own property now. I ask no questions; we will ask no questions, Bell; we will not be curious. I have neither eyes nor ears, Clara; I have only sunny thoughts, bright visions of Lady Kerrison presiding at Ripley, in spite of appearances; but, Bell, you must be blind: with all your might, remember; no more mistakes, if you please, and you may be of some use; you are too old to affect ignorance now, and I cannot excuse it.”

Christobelle was in a tremor; for the sentences which flowed in such profusion from her mother’s lips, conveyed no meaning to her mind; she was anxious to do right, but no distinct line of conduct had been pointed out; she told her mother steadily, yet in considerable alarm, that she did not know what was meant.

“I dare say not, Bell; your ideas are as limited as your poor father’s, and I can imagine your influence over his mind must be very extensive—the confluence of dullness and stupidity. However, Bell, you can, probably, comprehend what I mean, when I command you to keep all you see and hear to yourself.”

“Yes, mamma, I can do that.”

“Very well. If you find Sir Foster Kerrison at any time about the premises, don’t see him; and, whatever may take place around you, be ignorant of all things. Can you do this?”

“I will not say any thing to papa, unless he asks a question,” replied Christobelle, quite assured in mind that she was giving satisfaction at last; her mother did not join her in opinion.

“Nonsense, folly! you have not common sense to guide you through life, child. Thank Heaven, the burden of procuring *you* an establishment will not be upon my shoulders! Your father must manage that affair as he pleases; he takes the whole management of you upon himself. Your wretched matter-of-fact ways would traverse all my plans for your benefit.”

Christobelle was wrong again! She never could understand her mother’s innuendoes, and she told her so, though she trembled as the words

fell hesitating from her lips. She told her, also, that she could not comprehend the epithet "matter-of-fact," which she continually used with reference to her conduct. Alas! the explanation was to the artless girl equally unintelligible.

"You have no capacity, Bell, or you would understand the meaning of that expression. Your sisters were not matter-of-fact, unless, perhaps, Mrs. Tom Pynsent might be considered so; but time would have improved her; *you* are past hope. Nothing is so matter-of-fact, as believing every thing you hear, and answering questions point-blank. Nothing can be so cruelly matter-of-fact, as telling people exactly what you think, and making remarks upon people's movements. I believe matter-of-fact is born with you, and I can perceive no intuition, no tact in your manners, by which to imagine a germ might be fostered by practice. You will be very like your grand aunt, Bell, and like her, too, you will live single. I have no hopes from such mental poverty."

Clara appeared absorbed in her book, for she never raised her eyes, or joined in the conversation which related to her sister. After her haughtily expressed determination to be guided

by her own judgment, she remained silent, nor did she apparently hear a word that passed between her mother and Christobelle. Time was, certainly, fostering the "germ" of resolution in Clara's breast; and now that circumstances and events developed her character, it was easy to see she had shaken off all restraints, and intended to hold the reins in her own youthful and inexperienced hands. Lady Wetheral felt her power was no more, if it had ever existed, over Clara's opinions and conduct; and she detained her youngest daughter to listen to her grievances.

"Altogether, Bell, what with your dullness, and Clara's temper, I have never been happy since your sisters married. I have endured a great deal from your father's violence, too, lately; last night he was indescribably violent, and I am sinking into ill-health. He is resolved Clara shall not be Lady Kerrison, and he has ordered the poor dear man to be shown into the study when he calls to-day. Do be there, Bell, and report the whole affair; you surely have just capacity for that?"

"Report *nothing*," said Clara, without raising her eyes from her book.

"My dear Clara, you really shock me!" Her mother laid down her vinaigrette, and took up

the eau-de-luce. "My dear girl, you frighten me with such abrupt and alarming sentences. Do you not intend to marry Sir Foster Kerri-son?"

"Of course I do," replied Clara, haughtily.

"Then, my love, why do you forbid Bell reporting his interview with your father?"

"I hate all that nonsense and tale-bearing; let Bell alone; why is she to be taught eaves-dropping?"

"Really, Clara, you are becoming quite harsh. I certainly never taught any of you to do wrong, unless procuring the best alliances for you all is considered an injury. I cannot approve your remark, my dear love, at all."

Miss Wetheral did not reply.

"I cannot make out Clara's temper, Bell," whispered her mother, "there is nothing to be *got at* in her; I never can have any influence, when I particularly wish to point her attention to circumstances; however, I must let her take her own way, for she means to marry Sir Foster, I see, and my mind is fixed upon that match. Well, I shall rise, now, but I am seriously ill from your father's imperious conduct last night."

"I am very sorry, mamma."

"Sorry! Yes, it was your stupid folly which

caused such an unprovoked attack. When Clara marries, I shall visit my dear Julia: her situation, so exalted, and the novelty of a new neighbourhood, will amuse me. You can take care of Sir John while I am absent. Perhaps, Bell, I may see some young man who may do for you some six years hence."

"No, I thank you, mamma."

"Oh, do not be alarmed," exclaimed Lady Wetheral, a little indignantly, "I am not going to trouble myself about your fortunes. You can return to the study: don't tumble over the chairs, Bell. You are at that awkward, ugly age, all legs and wings—there, get you gone."

Christobelle was very well pleased to escape, for she ever dreaded a summons to her mother's apartments. She might be awkward, and her countenance might be displeasing, but her father never alluded to personal appearance. His voice breathed accents of kindness and affection, and he only taught her to be good and dutiful. To his study she retired, as to the home of her happiness, and she was there when Sir Foster Kerrison was announced, according to Sir John's orders. Lucy Kerrison had kept her word—she had indeed reminded her father of his *devoir* at Wetheral Castle.

Sir Foster stood somewhat bewildered, at his entrance : he had been marshalled to the right instead of the left, upon alighting, and he was now ushered into a large room filled with books, instead of work-baskets and ladies. Altogether, without the trouble of reasoning upon the matter, or exactly perceiving how things were, Sir Foster felt something was different from what it had been : the chain of daily events at Wetheral was broken ; he had got into a different line of action, without knowing why, or how it had been effected. Sir Foster's embarrassment, however, was only perceived in the nervous motion of his eye, and the tapping of his boot ; for, in despite of the unhappy absence of mind, which indolence had nurtured, and which ever produced ridicule, his manners were those of an eccentric but polite man.

Sir John Wetheral received him with gravity, but with kindness, and, after a few observations had passed upon the state of crops and the weather, he commenced the subject near his heart. Sir Foster sat in silent reverie while Sir John poured forth his regret at an engagement having been entered into with his daughter without his concurrence ; he spoke feelingly upon the deception which had surrounded that engage-

ment, and expressed his entire disapproval of the match. Sir Foster smiled and winked, as allusion was made to the known violence of his temper; and he tapped his boot with rapid strokes, when Sir John professed his more powerful objections arose from his constant absence at the house of prayer.—“If,” he said, “a man cared not to pray to his Maker, he would never heed the happiness of a creature committed to his care; and he would rather follow his child to the grave, than give her to a man who had no respect to earthly or heavenly things—whose passions were violent, and whose faith was unsettled.”

Sir Foster had nothing to say in extenuation, if he really understood the purport of the address; but he looked perfectly innocent of all charges, or of having attached any meaning to the sounds which reached his ear. Sir John remembered Sir Foster’s besetting sin, and accosted him again with decision, as Lady Wetheral had done in a similar situation, though upon a different subject.

“Sir Foster, I forbid your visits to my daughter Clara.”

Sir Foster raised his eyebrows, but he understood the sentence: it was clear and concise.

“Eh?—yes, certainly, if Lady Wetheral does not mind.”

“I am afraid, sir, Lady Wetheral has given you encouragement in this affair.”

“Umph!—ah!—yes; something of that sort.”

“I must insist upon ending the engagement, Sir Foster.”

“Eh!—what? Yes, if you like.”

There was a silence for some moments; it was broken by Sir Foster, in apparently complete forgetfulness of the preceding subject.

“Boscawen keep his blood mare?”

Sir John smiled, as he replied in the affirmative. Sir Foster began to wink his eye violently.

“Give him two hundred for her.”

Sir John mentioned his intended visit to Brierly, and offered to be the bearer of his message or intentions.

“Go with you.”

“Ripley does not lie far out of our way; shall I call for you, Sir Foster? We shall be happy to offer you a seat in or outside the carriage, which you please.”

Sir Foster smiled and hummed, which, according to Lucy Kerrison’s reading, implied consent; they were therefore to have the pleasure of his company on their journey. Sir John would not

feel annoyed by the accession of a taciturn companion; Sir Foster would, at least, be out of Clara's neighbourhood, and, what was more satisfactory, he would be beyond the reach of his lady's machinations.

After this arrangement, Sir Foster remained two hours, silently smiling in his chair, without changing his position, or appearing to feel the absence of his so lately affianced bride. Once initiated in another suite of apartments, it was more than likely he would, in future, seek the study as naturally as he had made his *sederunt* in the boudoir; but the proposed journey must interfere with his plans, and force them into other channels. Brierly and the blood-mare had present possession of his memory, and, unless they sank into the oblivious depths of his lethargic mind, Sir Foster was destined to become a millstone round the energies of Mr. Boscawen, and Clara must relinquish all hope of securing her fleeting lover.

Sir John was aware of his companion's eccentric habits, therefore his studies were quietly resumed, and Sir Foster was allowed to smile and doze out his allotted time in his own peculiar way. Happiness is very differently defined by individuals: Sir Foster considered it enjoyed in

a long course of half-dreamy nothingness, seated in a soft arm-chair, tapping his boot, and not bored by questions or remarks: Mrs. Hancock and Mrs. Pynsent loved locomotion, and considered life given as a means of enjoyment in talking, walking, driving, laughing, and "fun:" Sir John Wetheral loved retirement with books: his lady confessed she delighted in matchmaking, and visiting different watering-places: yet do we know and feel happiness is not of this world; and our enjoyments prove, in the end, the highway to trials and cares.

Sir Foster Kerrison, at length, awoke from his long calm, and put on his hat. Christobelle was reading aloud to her father, but she became silent at this moment, which denoted preparation for departure. Sir Foster did not observe this; probably he did not see them, for he rose humming an air, and, winking very nervously, looked attentively at a portrait of "Eclipse," and walked deliberately out of the study. This was Sir Foster's "odd way," and no one ever took offence at any thing Sir Foster did or said. Sir John only remarked, in his gentle way, "Clara's idea of Sir Foster's temper may not coincide with mine—a young girl cannot understand how deeply her husband's temper may implicate her

happiness—but I am astonished at her taste, in selecting a man whose manners must disgust a delicate woman, and who has already forgotten his dismissal, in anxiety to purchase a blood-mare at Brierly. I fear Clara is dazzled by motives which blind her to truth. I will take you to Brierly, my love, to-morrow: I long to get you away from this place.”

When Christobelle passed through the chapel to reach her own room, she saw Clara and Sir Foster Kerrison walking in the avenue: she could not be mistaken; the chapel-window commanded the avenue, and Clara was seen distinctly. She appeared in very earnest conversation: Sir Foster led his horse by the bridle-rein, and Christobelle thought one arm was round Clara's waist. She remembered her mother's injunction “not to see” Sir Foster if she met him upon the premises; and she obeyed the spirit of her meaning, for she made no observation respecting what she had seen. Clara appeared at dinner perfectly calm and collected, and her spirits were higher than usual: she had not the pale cheek, or monumental look, which Shakespeare describes so pathetically—there was no sign that

“He she loved proved false, and did forsake her.”

All was tranquil health and untamed spirits in Clara's beautiful face. Christobelle persuaded herself she could *not* have seen her sister in the avenue, and that she was yet ignorant of Sir Foster's intention to accompany them to Brierly, and bid high for the blood-mare. When the family separated for the night, Lady Wetheral coolly wished her youngest daughter a happy meeting with her friends at Brierly: she should not be up, and begged Christobelle would not rattle at her door with her awkward fingers, under pretence of leave-taking. She was to give her love to Mrs. Boscawen, and bid her remember the baize-door for the nursery.

Clara advanced and kissed her sister: she spoke laughingly.

"You need not visit my room, Bell, to-morrow, because I shall be very busy; but I wish you lots of happiness, if there is such material at Brierly. How long do you remain?"

"Papa says, till you are all at Fairlee."

"Oh, well, a happy meeting to us all at Fairlee; but, Bell, before we meet again,

'I'm o'er the border, and awa'
Wi' Jock o' Hasledean !'

You don't understand me? Never mind—I don't

think I shall like Fairlee. How you stare, Miss Bell!"

Christobelle did look surprised : she could not understand Clara's gaiety upon her lover's dismissal. She retired to her room, however, and lost all recollections, in deep and sweet slumber, both of the past and present.

CHAPTER XIII.

Sir John Wetheral and Christobelle were speedily on their road to Ripley. The morning air was fresh and delicious, for May was on its threshold, and April had passed in smiles. The father's countenance beamed with pleasure, for he was conferring happiness—and his daughter was revelling in delight, because she was rolling towards Isabel, and should enjoy hours of amusement with the kind and patient Mr. Boscawen. All nature smiled under her eager eye, and she fancied the woods of Ripley even more beautiful than the grounds of Wetheral. They turned from the high road, through the great gates of Ripley Park, and wound for nearly two miles by the side of a lake, magnificent in her estimation at that time, and lovely in its stillness, now. The grey towers of Ripley burst upon the sight, as they turned rapidly from the beautiful sheet

of water to enter the deep shrubbery which led to its entrance, and Christobelle could not help exclaiming—"Oh, papa, how beautiful this is!"

"Yes, Christobelle, it is lovely; and all, save the spirit of man, is divine," replied her father, patting her shoulder.

"That was a quotation, papa, from Lord Byron, which you read to me yesterday. Oh, see what a collection of beautiful plants are ranged in the conservatory!"

Christobelle was engrossed with the sight of the numerous flowering shrubs, when the carriage stopped, and four servants advanced to the hall-door. Sir John inquired if their master was at home.

Sir Foster had been from home since half-past five o'clock that morning.

"When was he expected to return?"

Sir Foster had left no orders or directions.

"Surely," said Sir John, "Sir Foster has forgotten our engagement, and has set off to Brierly alone. Is Miss Kerrison at home?"

Miss Kerrison was walking in the park—should they send her information of Sir John Wetheral's arrival?

"By no means. Sir Foster is probably gone to Brierly; but, if your master returns from else-

where, inform him I am on the road to Bridgnorth." Sir John ordered the postillions to proceed.

They drove back, towards the park gates, and met Miss Kerrison, at the head of her little troop of brothers and sisters. The carriage stopped at their approach, and Lucy Kerrison's eyes sparkled with pleasure.

"Are you come for *me*, Sir John? Has Lady Wetheral sent for *me*, by your early visit?"

The expression of her face clouded over, when she learned their destination; but she could not enlighten her friends upon Sir Foster's flight. Lucy said, "her father did such odd things, that no one at Ripley ever knew where he was. Sometimes he was here, and sometimes he was there — he had left the house very early, which was rather an event of novelty, as he seldom rose before eleven; but she was sure her father did not know himself where he was going, and no one else could guess." With this unsatisfactory intelligence, Sir John and Christobelle were obliged to take leave of Miss Kerrison, and pursue their route. Sir John persisted in supposing Sir Foster far on his way towards Briery. Christobelle, on the other hand, felt an undefinable assurance that he was gone to visit

Clara. The subject, however, faded soon from the mind of each; and Sir John cheered the remainder of the drive, by pleasant tales, and affectionate questionings upon subjects they had read together.

Isabel screamed with joy at her father and sister's arrival. She was walking up and down before their door, holding her husband's arm, when the carriage suddenly appeared before them. She rushed to the door, ere the servant could open it, and threw herself into her father's arms.

“ Oh, papa, what a blessing this is! What made you think of coming to see us so soon? and pray let Chrystal remain with me for some months, now she is here. Oh, papa, this is such a happiness! such a comfort!” Isabel threw her arms round her sister's neck, and wept.

“ Well, Chrystal, you see I am crying; but it's for joy to see you both at Brierly. I hope you will stay a long time! My dear papa, come in, and refresh yourself before dinner;—and, Chrystal, you will be such a dear companion to me!”

Mr. Boscawen waited till the raptures were ended, and then he welcomed them to Brierly, with the kindness which ever made him agree-

able to those he esteemed. The meeting on all sides was most delightful in feeling, and they entered the house, full of smiles and mutual content. Isabel stood for a moment in the hall, and looked at her husband.

“ Mr. Boscawen, I am going to take my sister up stairs, into my room—is that right ?”

“ Certainly, my love, do so ; the half-hour bell will ring in a few minutes.”

Isabel seated herself, when they had gained her dressing-room, and drew a chair for her sister.

“ Now, Chrystal, just take off your hat and shake your curls.” Christobelle did so.

“ Very well ; now you are ready for dinner, so let us chat out the time till the bell rings, and tell me all about Wetheral. Poor Wetheral !—I often wish I was there again. Oh, Chrystal, perhaps now you are arrived, I shall not be so much with Miss Tabitha, work, work, work, all day long !—but what brought you here, without any notice ? I hope every body is well ?”

Christobelle gave her sister all the Wetheral news, and detailed the affairs of Clara as clearly as her young judgment would allow. Isabel was charmed.

“ Well, papa was so good to prevent Clara marrying that old Sir Foster ! I assure you,

Chrystal, it would have been a foolish affair. How would poor Clara have endured reading four or five hours every day, per force, with her warm temper?"

"Sir Foster never reads, Isabel."

"Ah, but he would have compelled her to read; for old men are all alike, Chrystal. You may depend upon it, Clara would have been miserable. Is Sir Foster very unhappy about it?"

Christobelle told her in confidence what she had seen as she passed through the chapel, and how cheerful Clara appeared afterwards at dinner. Isabel looked serious.

"What could that mean? I was very unhappy, I know, till papa said I should marry Mr. Boscawen. I was very silly, then; but Clara was not Lady Kerrison, therefore she did not know how very soon those things are got over, and I am surprised she was cheerful just at that time. I wonder any body marries so young, when they can do as they please at home. Don't marry, Chrystal, till you are thirty."

The great gong sounded at this moment, and Isabel rose to make a change in her dress: but she continued talking.

"I don't mind that horrible gong, to-day,

because you and papa are here; but it is always a signal to me of misery. After the gong sounds, I am sure to pass the remainder of the day with Miss Tabitha, and I am tired to death with teaching. In the morning I am learning geography and history, and the evening brings tent-stitch and lectures. I hope I shan't be obliged to learn tent-stitch while you are here."

Isabel's maid appeared, to assist her mistress.

"Oh, is that you, Mrs. Anson? Do you know if Mr. Boscawen has ordered any change in the dinner? I am sure I forgot all about it. Dear me, Anson, how hot your hands are! Well, if ever I felt such hands! Mr. Boscawen's hands are cold as ice. Just scratch out my hair, Anson. I don't care how it looks; no more will Clara, if she marries Sir There is Mr. Boscawen's tap against the wall; don't you hear it? Now that tap always means that he is ready to go down, and I must hold my tongue and make haste. I am always chatting to Mrs. Anson, when you are not here, Chrystal. Come, I am ready now."

They left the dressing-room, and Mr. Boscawen appeared immediately at his door. He offered an arm to each, and they descended to the drawing-room, where Sir John was seated in

company with Miss Boscawen, who was diligently plying at a large worsted-work frame, dressed in dove-coloured silk, the whitest muslin handkerchief, and the most delicate net-cap which had ever gladdened the eye: she was indeed the *beau ideal* of an old maid. Christobelle looked with pleased astonishment at the delicate cleanliness of her person; the band of brown hair, intermingled with grey, which peeped beneath her cap—the tightly-fitting dress—her white silk mittens—the repose of her countenance, which looked smilingly upon her—all inclined Christobelle to admire and gaze upon Miss Tabitha Boscawen. Surely, this could not be the original of Isabel's gloomy description!

Christobelle's admiration amused and pleased Miss Boscawen: she rose, and held out her hand. "You are welcome," she said, "to Brierly, Miss Wetheral. Our dear Isabel will be delighted to have a companion in her work and studies."

Christobelle was charmed by the reception, and stood near Miss Boscawen, examining her work, and watching its progress. She was pleased by her young acquaintance's curiosity, for she performed her stitches very slowly, to allow time for observation. She asked Christobelle if she loved work: Christobelle told her

she should like to learn to work well, but that she was very fond of reading. She smiled.

“ I shall be happy to teach you every kind of stitch, Miss Wetheral, when you are tired with books. I like to see young people employed. Every hour is valuable, and idleness is the mother of mischief, as you may remember writing in your copybook. I hope you are never idle, Miss Wetheral ?”

Isabel answered for her sister.

“ Oh, dear Tabitha, Chrystal is always reading history and poetry : I am astonished at her learning, for I never could bear reading or writing : I liked my doll best, and dancing with Tom Pynsent.”

“ We shall like one another, Miss Wetheral, I foresee,” said Miss Boscawen, taking no notice of the latter part of Isabel’s speech.

At dinner, Isabel sat silent. She took her seat at the head of the table, it is true ; but her eyes were constantly referring to her husband, and sundry whispers from Miss Boscawen, who sat at her right hand, increased her alarm and confusion. There were some attractive glasses of raspberry-cream upon the table at the second course, to which Isabel “ did seriously incline,”

and she accordingly had one placed before her. Miss Boscawen was distressed.

“ Oh ! sister, that is the worst thing you could eat at this time ! Pray send away that cream ! John, take away that cream ! ”

Isabel’s eyes overflowed, as the cream vanished from her sight : Mr. Boscawen saw her disappointment with pity, and endeavoured to mitigate the sentence.

“ Tabitha, *half* a cream will not hurt Isabel : let her try half a cream.”

“ Oh, brother, the very worst thing my sister could take ! No, don’t eat a cream, sister.”

“ I think,” said Sir John, “ as the parent of five children, I will undertake to answer for the innocence of the cream. Lady Wetheral fancied many extraordinary things, and did not suffer from their effects. I should be inclined to give Isabel that cream, Boscawen.”

Mr. Boscawen appeared pleased by an opinion of some weight and experience, which coincided with his own wish to gratify his young wife : he accordingly ordered the cream to be reinstated on her plate. Isabel ate of it greedily.

“ Oh, brother ! ” exclaimed Miss Boscawen, “ sister will be so ill ! ”

Mr. Boscawen, however, enjoyed the eager-

ness and satisfaction with which Isabel devoured her cream. "Poor thing, poor thing!" he uttered, in a low tone, as Isabel laid down her spoon, and exclaimed, "How excellently good that was!"

"It will do you no harm, my love," said her father, as he watched her with great interest; "I will answer for your not suffering any unpleasant effects."

"Oh! Sir John," exclaimed Miss Boscawen, "creams are such very indigestible things! I am sure sister will be very poorly; indeed, brother, sister will be ill."

Christobelle now understood the meaning of poor Isabel's distress, when she complained at Wetheral, that only Miss Tabitha was to preside over her confinement. Miss Boscawen did indeed watch over her with jealous care, and, like Don Pedro Snatchaway in Sancho's suite, she allowed her victim neither to eat nor drink in peace. When the ladies retired from the dining-room, Miss Boscawen fidgeted about Isabel's seat. She was not to sit near the window—it was cold; she was not to sit near the fire—it was hot: the sofa was not quite the thing, and the chairs might make her uncomfortable. Poor Isabel looked at her sister in despair.

Miss Boscawen was equally alarmed when Isabel offered to walk round the flower-garden with Christobelle.

“ Oh ! sister, the sun is setting, and you will take such a cold ! you have eaten a cream ; pray don't take cold upon it.”

The walk was given up ; Isabel would chat about Wetheral.

“ Now, sister, don't talk much just after your dinner ; nothing does so much harm to the constitution, and so completely prevents digestion.”

Well, then, they would all take a little nap.

“ Won't you get very fat, sister ?” asked Miss Boscawen, as she saw Isabel preparing to lie down upon the sofa ; “ sleep fattens very much.”

Isabel, however, made her preparations, and composed herself to sleep. Christobelle sat by her with a book which she had taken from one of the tables. Miss Boscawen sat down to her worsted frame, and rang for candles. They were some time silent, when Isabel started up and exclaimed she was extremely unwell. Miss Boscawen looked horrified.

“ Oh ! sister, that cream ! I knew you would be ill.”

“ I cannot tell the reason, but I am very ill. Send for Mr. Boscawen, Chrystal.” Isabel

looked very pale, and was unable to rise from the sofa.

“Oh! sister, don't send for my brother; let me assist you to your room; the cream has made you sick.”

“Send for Mr. Boscawen,” repeated Isabel, her face becoming flushed with pain.

Mr. Boscawen was summoned, and he carried Isabel to her bed. The surprise and joy of receiving her family unexpectedly, had brought on a rather premature confinement. The medical man was sent for, the nurse was summoned in haste, all the household were in commotion, The medical attendant gave it as his opinion some surprise or alarm had hastened Mrs. Boscawen's accouchement. Miss Boscawen was convinced it was the raspberry-cream.

Sir John decided to remain at Brierly, till Isabel should be considered out of all danger, and till the little stranger should receive his blessing. All that night passed in eager hope and watching. Christobelle could not sleep; she could not rest in her bed, but remained at Isabel's door, listening to every sound and foot-fall till the morning dawned; and then Miss Boscawen insisted upon her going to rest again. “Isabel was doing very well, considering she had

hastened every thing by eating the cream so pertinaciously, against her own better judgment; she never could digest cream herself at any period of her life; how could her sister expect to do so, when she was so near her confinement?"

Under many promises on Miss Boscawen's part not to forget her in the general confusion, Christobelle retired to her room, and slept long and soundly; when she woke again, Isabel was in safety, and the house of Boscawen rejoiced in a son and heir to succeed to its honours. Miss Boscawen brought the blessed intelligence herself, and redeemed her promise by so doing. Christobelle wanted to fly that instant to her sister, but Miss Boscawen objected. "She was too young to judge of consequences," she remarked; "she would talk too much, or laugh too loud for Isabel's nerves. She should visit her in proper time, and at proper seasons; she had just seen her father, and he had taken Master Boscawen in his arms, and pronounced him a very fine child. Isabel was now, she hoped, asleep."

Christobelle said she would rise immediately, as she wanted very much to see her father; she was surprised to learn he had quitted Brierly soon after his interview with Isabel. He would not allow Christobelle to be called, because her

rest had been broken; he left his affectionate love, and his wishes that his child would write often, and attend to Miss Boscawen's directions in her conduct. He had returned to Wetheral rather earlier than he intended, but business of importance called him away. This was Christobelle's first separation from her father. She learned afterwards Mr. Boscawen's perfect approbation of his scheme to spend some months in Scotland; and by so doing, putting it out of Clara's power to renew her engagement with Sir Foster, induced Sir John to hurry away to its fulfilment. It was his intention to leave Wetheral in the course of a fortnight with the whole establishment, and pass the summer at Fairlee. Christobelle was to be Mr. Boscawen's care till her father recalled her.

Isabel was delighted with that part of the plan which decided her sister a guest at Brierly for an indefinite period. The satisfaction of her mind gave her strength and spirits to delight in her little one, and to bear with unparalleled sweetness of temper the tiresome attentions and fears of Miss Boscawen. Nothing was quite right with the old lady which did not emanate from herself. The child was too upright, or it was too long in a horizontal posture. Its food was

acid, or too sweet ; it was too tight in its clothes, or the poor little thing was hardly kept together in its covering. Isabel tied and untied, as the complaint dictated ; but some new fault was ever arising to rouse the alarms of Miss Boscawen. One morning, Isabel amused herself by dressing her babe with her own hands, a pleasure she had not enjoyed since its birth. The nurse sat by her mistress's bed-side, watching and directing the operation, while Christobelle gazed delightedly at the little thing as it crowed and stretched its limbs. The sisters were most pleasingly occupied when Miss Boscawen entered. Her alarms were roused immediately.

“ Oh ! sister, how can you sit up there, dressing the child ? Nurse, take away the infant, your mistress will be so fatigued ! you must lie down again, sister.”

“ Sister,” however, was for once resolved to persist ; she could not relinquish the delightful amusement.

“ Tabitha, I have not washed my child ; I am only putting on his dear little clothes.”

“ Oh ! sister, you are very wrong ; you suffered by that cream which I begged you not to touch, and now I must insist upon your lying down ; what will my brother say ?”

“ Mr. Boscawen will not object to seeing me dress my little boy,” replied Isabel.

“ Oh! sister, he will indeed. My brother is not aware how you fatigue yourself. Nurse, pray take the infant from your mistress.”

Isabel became nervous, and the baby began to cry with all its might. Miss Boscawen was certain he was nearly strangled by tight strings.

“ There, sister, you have hurt him ; the tapes are tied too tightly, I dare say. How can you dress a babe, sister, when you never had one before ? Nurse, take the poor infant.”

A passion of tears weakened Isabel beyond all that the mere dressing of her babe could produce. Miss Boscawen became alarmed, and she ceased all further expostulation. Mr. Boscawen, who never remained long absent from his wife and child, at this moment entered the room. Isabel sobbed out :

“ Mr. Boscawen !”

“ Here I am, my love. What has discomposed you ? I am afraid you are feverish.” Mr. Boscawen seated himself in the nurse’s chair, and felt Isabel’s pulse ; he looked very grave. “ My dear Isabel, this pulse won’t do. Nurse, what has caused this fever ?”

“ Tabitha won’t let me dress my child, Mr.

Boscawen," sobbed Isabel, clasping her hands, and looking heart-broken.

"Give your mistress her child, nurse. My dear Isabel, you shall dress it whenever you please. Dress it now, my love, and let me see how maternally you can handle your infant." Mr. Boscawen took his boy from the nurse, and placed it in Isabel's arms. Delighted with the action, and feeling the kindness of her husband's manner, Isabel almost involuntarily kissed Mr. Boscawen's hand.

"Oh! brother, you are very wrong," exclaimed Miss Boscawen, looking anxiously at Isabel, whose delight was unbounded.

"A mother is performing a laudable and pleasing duty, Tabitha, when she nurses and fondles her child."

"Ah! but, brother, you are very wrong. Sister will be quite low and ill this evening. I foretold that cream business, brother."

What could Miss Boscawen do? Isabel continued to play with her child, and her brother authorised the deed; nay, he was watching his wife's movements with earnest and pleased attention. Her authority was of no avail, since her brother sanctioned such very improper exertions; she could only sigh, and resign herself to

her own duties — the worsted frame, and ordering dinner.

Miss Boscawen had a kind heart; her own dictations were prompted by good-will to others, and a desire to give pleasure, but then those pleasures must proceed from herself. She loved Isabel, and watched carefully over her health; but Isabel must not think for herself; every idea must originate from Miss Boscawen, otherwise it could not be wisely carried into effect; it could not even be wisely planned, if Miss Boscawen had not been a party in its formation. This was irritating and vexatious. Christobelle was under many obligations to Miss Boscawen, and loved her, when circumstances did not bring her into contact with Isabel. She very patiently undertook to teach her all kinds and varieties of work. She learned all the worsted stitches, and could assist her in sorting colours very ably. Miss Boscawen protested always against idleness in young people, and loved to see Christobelle employed in reading, or, practising under her tuition, the tasteful arts of tatting, embroidery, and fancy-work. Miss Boscawen and Christobelle were very good friends; and she often drew her attention from Isabel, and prevented

sundry visits to her sister's room, which would have terminated in mutual annoyance.

Christobelle had been a fortnight at Brierly, when a letter from Lady Wetheral threw her into consternation. It was a great honour to be noticed by her mother, but its contents were astounding.

“ Dear Bell,

“ You must make up your mind to return home, and be useful in spite of your stupidity, for I can't be left without a companion. Your father alarms me to death with his violence; and as to Clara, she has every excuse for the step she has taken. You know poor Clara and Sir Foster were very much attached, and it was tyranny to separate them. Nothing would serve your father but breaking off their engagement, so Clara ran away with Kerrison the day you quitted Wetheral. I declare I knew nothing about Clara's intention, for your sister always did as she pleased, without consulting me. However, she is Lady Kerrison now, and mistress of Ripley, which I always particularly wished might be her destiny.

“ Your father has been ill, and confined some days to his room; but, I confess, *I* never was better, or more satisfied with the contemplation

of my daughters' excellent establishments. Of course, Clara has no settlement; but Kerrison is a poor, half-witted creature, and it will be her fault if she does not do as she pleases with him. The first Lady Kerrison gave way too much. The Kerrisons arrived at Ripley two days ago, and your father will not allow me to call upon them. I cannot think it right to bear malice; it would have been another thing if Clara had married a curate, or Lesley's son. I tell Sir John we ought to forgive as we hope to be forgiven ourselves; but he shakes his head like Lord Burleigh, and waves me away. Altogether, his temper is become extremely violent, and I must have you at home, for Thompson is going to marry the Hatton butler, and set up a public-house. I have no patience with servants marrying.

“I hope Isabel does not nurse; it will ruin her figure. Whereabouts is the nursery? I hope *miles* from her room. Tell her about the baize door; and as boys have loud voices, give the child lettuce lozenges, and make it sleep day and night. I hope Boscawen won't let her nurse it. When you return, perhaps you will persuade your father to forgive the Kerrisons, for I wish to give a succession of parties, and I

am sure I knew nothing about Clara's intentions. I think Frank Kerrison would be an excellent match for you, Bell, a few years hence. I shall send Thompson for you next week. Yours truly,

“G. WETHERAL.”

Christobelle wept over Clara's flight; she wept over her dear father's illness, but still more over the summons to return and become her mother's companion. She gave her letter to Miss Boscawen in distress, for she could not trust her voice. Christobelle was too young then to understand her error in so doing. She was not aware the letter laid bare to Miss Boscawen's notice all her mother's private thoughts and intentions, and that its perusal must consign her to contempt and ridicule, in the opinion of brother and sister. She considered only her wretched fate in returning to Wetheral, as the avowed companion of a person who had never loved her, and who felt compelled to bear with “stupidity,” because Thompson was on the eve of matrimony.

Miss Boscawen returned the letter without any comment: she advised Christobelle to conceal its intelligence from Isabel, and try to appear gay, lest the idea of losing her sister should

affect her spirits. It might be, Lady Wetheral's mind would change, or some event occur to postpone her return. She would inform her brother of the intimation from Wetheral ; but in the mean time Christobelle was to drive all thoughts from her mind of leaving Brierly for some time to come.

With these consolations before her mental view, combined with the hopes and sprightliness of extreme youth, Christobelle soon forgot her sorrow, and enjoyed, in happy forgetfulness, the calm pleasures of Brierly. Thompson did not make her appearance, and the Boscawens never alluded to the transactions which had taken place at Wetheral. In a few days, therefore, all fears were hushed, and she resumed her usual occupations and amusements. Isabel made her appearance in the sitting-room in due time, to her sister's great satisfaction ; but their mutual comfort was disturbed daily and hourly by the watchful affection of Miss Boscawen, who objected and demurred to every project and action on their parts, on the score of health. By this vexatious exaction of power on the sister's side, one material change was effected, which progressively gave happiness to Isabel, and gilded the gloominess of Brierly to her eye and heart. It drew her thoughts and affection

towards her husband, who so often shielded her from Miss Boscawen's anxieties, particularly in her treatment of her son.

June opened so brightly in sunbeams and flowers, that Isabel and her sister loved to sit with the babe under the shade of a large mulberry-tree which stood upon the lawn. The air benefitted Isabel, and the soft rustling of the mulberry leaves lulled the infant into sound sleep. This pleasure was not suffered to pass without its alloy. Miss Boscawen was not the inventor of the agreeable *al fresco*, therefore it was wrong.

“Oh, sister, don't sit there! Miss Wetheral, my dear, come in. The flies will kill that poor child; nurse, bring it in. Sister, your complexion!”

“I don't mind my complexion, Tabitha, at all; and my child is very sleepy; it is just closing its eyes.”

Miss Boscawen stood at the drawing-room window, with a parasol in her hand.

“Oh, but, sister, that is wrong: the child will be bitten all over with flies. Miss Wetheral, my dear, bring your sister in.”

“Tabitha, here are no flies, I assure you. Don't insist upon my leaving this shady place!” exclaimed Isabel, beseechingly.

“ Oh, sister, the heat ! what will my brother say ? Oh, brother, I am glad you are come, for sister is doing very foolishly.”

“ What is Isabel doing ?” asked Mr. Boscawen, quickly.

“ Sister is quite in a draught, brother ; and the poor child must be all over insects and flies !”

Mr. Boscawen joined his lady. He stood for some moments contemplating Isabel, who sat in a low rustic chair, gently rocking the sleeping babe on her lap. She smiled as she met his eye.

“ Mr. Boscawen, I know you are come to take my part. You won't insist upon my leaving this shady seat, will you ?”

“ No, my love, I am going to enjoy it with you.” Mr. Boscawen seated himself on the turf, at Isabel's feet. Christobelle could not help thinking of the fairy tale which described Beauty and the Beast. It was exemplified in the forms before her. Isabel, so young and delicate, sat like a fairy, graceful in every movement, bending over her child, smiling, and delighting to be free from her sister-in-law's power. Boscawen, gaunt, tall, and unlovely, lay extended near her, smiling grimly. Miss Boscawen saw her alarms were unheeded.

“ Oh, brother, you are wrong. Sister will be

very poorly, and you are on the damp grass yourself—oh, brother !”

It was a useless lamentation : the little party remained long and happily seated under the mulberry-tree ; and Isabel, grateful for her husband’s sanction, became less reserved in his presence. In time, she even sought his society, and the infant was ever a bond of union and affection between them. Christobelle did not think the gay, thoughtless Isabel would have become such a fond, anxious mother, so devoted to her child, so active as a nurse. And yet, why was she surprised ? Had not Isabel warm affections, and was she not the favourite at Wetheral ; always kind and conciliating, always gentle and beloved ? Mr. Boscawen’s age and manners chilled Isabel’s heart by his anxiety to bestow attainments upon a mind which disliked application ; but her child was sure to call forth every particle of her affectionate heart ; its daily wants, its helplessness, made her useful in the way she best loved.

There was no more dull schooling for Isabel to pine over—no more lectures from Mr. Boscawen to urge her forward against her inclination, and perhaps against her capacity. Another object had entered upon the scene, to engross

and charm each parent. Isabel never wearied in watching her babe; her dislike to work chair-covers and footstools, under Miss Boscawen's surveillance, was now succeeded by a taste for baby-clothes; and the quickness with which she acquired from the nurse the mystery of cutting out, and shaping materials, proved that an object alone was needed to call forth her energies.

Mr. Boscawen was content to see his lady so employed; the schoolmaster gave way to the parent; and he was no longer distressed by his young wife's thoughtless speeches. How could Isabel talk unadvisedly, when her only subject embraced the nursery department? How could she alarm her husband's nice perceptions in conversation, when all her thoughts rested in one absorbing interest—on one dear and mutual object of earthly pleasure?

Christobelle was happiest of the happy at Brierly. Mr. Boscawen had always something pointed in his remarks which attracted her admiration; and if Isabel could not withdraw her attention from her new and delightful occupation, Christobelle was ready to profit by her husband's extensive reading; to listen with eagerness to his details; and enjoy his animat-

ing comments upon men and books. Miss Boscawen was aware that her brother's attention was given exclusively now to his wife and child, to the utter exclusion of her complaints and alarms; but her anxieties abated not. She still objected to every arrangement, and cavilled at all pleasures which her own brain had not devised; she could not even participate in them.

Isabel had long wished to spend a day in Bridgnorth. She knew no one in that part of the country; she could scarcely give a reason for wishing to visit that quiet rural spot; but she had been struck by its beautiful scenery, as she passed and repassed from Wetheral. She liked its situation, its river, its luxuriant banks; altogether, she had an extraordinary desire to spend a day at Bridgnorth, and take her child. It was a little change, it would be a pleasant long drive, and she was sure every body would like the little trip. Isabel mechanically watched her husband as she uttered her wish. He smiled. Isabel found a willing auditor, and her desire waxed stronger in word and deed.

“Well, now, dear Mr. Boscawen, you will take us; won't you? Chrystal and the child will have so many things to see. To be sure, the dear babe can't understand what he sees, but I

shall so like to carry him about the town, and hear people admiring his little beautiful face!"

Mr. Boscawen was overcome. This was the first time Isabel had ever addressed him as "dear Mr. Boscawen," and she was tossing her child at the moment with such grace, with such beaming affection! He threw his long arms round his wife and child, most ungracefully, but most fondly.—

"We will do as you wish, my love; we will go to Bridgnorth for a day—for a week, if you prefer it."

Isabel smiled in her husband's embrace, and looked truly happy. At that moment, perhaps, a change passed over the mind of each. Mr. Boscawen lost his alarmed and disgusted pupil in the matronly woman and companion, at least in *one* engrossing care. Isabel might feel that the task-master was exchanged for a kind and indulgent protector. Her child might engross her heart, but she would honour its father, and rejoice under his mild administration. Isabel's nature was grateful: she must love those who kindly sought her happiness; and Mr. Boscawen's attention to her wishes would surely secure her content of heart. Miss Boscawen appeared the only thorn in her path likely to

affect her peace; but the release from books and study was to Isabel's mind emancipation from all evils. The minor vexations of life were hardly felt by her yielding and gentle temper.

The Bridgnorth excursion was at once negatived by Miss Boscawen.

“Oh, sister, going to Bridgnorth! Mercy! who do we know in Bridgnorth, brother?”

“My wife wishes it, Tabitha.”

“Oh mercy, brother, what a foolish wish! Eleven miles' drive, and a day spent in Bridgnorth!—what for, sister?”

“I always admired Bridgnorth, Tabitha, and I want to show my babe. I have set my heart upon displaying my babe.”

“Oh, sister, mercy! I can't think a drive to Bridgnorth can do you any good. No, stay at home, sister.”

“Mr. Boscawen has no objection, Tabitha. Have you, dear Mr. Boscawen?”

“Oh, but, brother, what nonsense! the child will be sick, and sister will be so tired! Don't go to Bridgnorth, sister: let us spend a day at Hawkstone next week.”

“I have set my heart upon Bridgnorth,” said Isabel, throwing an appealing glance to her husband.

Mr. Boscawen was resolved to please his wife. There was a link between them now, which nothing human could dissolve. Perhaps Mr. Boscawen silently felt pride in the idea of displaying his "beautiful babe," as Isabel termed it. At Brierly, beyond the establishment, there were none to gaze and admire. An elderly gentleman is generally proud of his first-born; the less he says, the more apparent it becomes in action. Mr. Boscawen watched his infant with unceasing interest, though he seldom made it the subject of his discourse. He was now going to enjoy the commendations of passing strangers in Bridgnorth. Isabel openly confessed her pride and expectations; they only lurked in her husband's eyes.

Miss Boscawen could not hear the subject named without expressing her dissent. She had not proposed the drive, or even imagined such an amusement, therefore the whole affair must be foolish and useless. Mr. Boscawen urged his sister to remain at Brierly—there was no occasion for her to undertake an irksome drive, if it was so unpalatable—she could prepare a late tea against their return. Miss Boscawen differed in opinion.

"Oh, mercy, no, brother! I must go, to see

that sister does not fatigue herself. The poor child, you know—yes, sister, I will go with you, but, indeed, I think it a very foolish business — what with the heat, and the poor child, I am sure we shall all be very tired.”

In spite of Miss Boscawen’s murmurs and prognostics, Isabel looked forward with pleasure to the Bridgnorth visit, which was to take place in two days from the date of its first proposition. Isabel gloried in the idea of walking with her infant round the Castle Hill, and up all the streets; she was sure every body would exclaim at the size and beauty of her boy, and it would be a day of proud exultation to her. She was also gratefully eloquent upon her husband’s kindness in entering at once into her plan; she was sure she must be the happiest creature in the world, if dear Mr. Boscawen never more required her to read, and plague herself over maps and things. She dearly loved nursing and singing to her babe, and dear Mr. Boscawen had told her that morning, he did not mind the child crying half the night; he was only happy to see what an excellent nurse and mother he had married. Was not that very good of dear Mr. Boscawen?

Christobelle also looked forward with pleasure to the trip; she had never been allowed to ac-

company her family to Shrewsbury, because Lady Wetheral said, nothing was so impolitic as displaying a lot of coming-on girls; she had never seen a cluster of houses beyond the small village of Wetheral, and her mind resigned itself to most pleasing anticipations of Bridgnorth gaiety. She could conceive nothing more charming than roaming with Isabel up and down the streets, and examining the shop-windows — nothing more sublime than standing upon the bridge, to watch the coal-barges from its parapet—nothing more exquisite than the permission to buy gingerbread-nuts without remark and without ridicule. There were not two happier beings than Isabel and Christobelle, in their visions of the pleasures which were to surround them at Bridgnorth.

CHAPTER XIV.

How could any party, however pleasantly arranged, prosper with Miss Boscawen as one of its members? Nothing could exceed her restlessness, and objection to every plan proposed. They were not setting forth to Hawkstone, therefore every thing was ill-devised — every preparation was nonsensical. Mr. Boscawen rode forward to order dinner, consequently Isabel must endure her sister-in-law's complaints with patient submission; and her comfort, during that lengthened drive, must arise from silently contemplating her child, and exchanging looks of vexation with Christobelle. They had not quitted the Brierly grounds, when Miss Boscawen commenced an enumeration of miseries which must fall to their lot from persisting in their excursion.

“Oh, sister, mercy! How you can wish to spend a whole day in such a place as Bridgnorth,

I cannot imagine. The poor child will be so uneasy, and you will be so heated; and Miss Wetheral, my dear, you had better not walk about, but sit quietly at the Crown with us all. I have brought my knitting, and a piece of carpet-work; and, mercy, sister!—what will you do with the child? and how can you be comfortable at the Crown with a baby?”

Christobelle ventured to think the baby would prove their greatest amusement, and Isabel's eyes and lips seconded the observation. Miss Boscawen smiled good-humouredly upon Christobelle, as upon a child whose opinions availed nothing, though the motive was amiable which produced them; but she addressed Mrs. Boscawen in reply.

“Oh! sister, this is such a sad business—every thing will be very uncomfortable, and that poor little baby will be heated into a fever.”

Isabel replied gently to all the uncomfortable prophecies uttered by her sister-in-law; but their constant repetition destroyed the pleasure of the drive. It was vain to contend against Miss Boscawen's reasoning, for the result was a quietly-expressed pertinacity, which must end in the discomfiture of her gentle antagonist: it was equally impossible to resent an opposition which

took its rise in anxiety for the object whom she professed to love and watch over.

Miss Boscawen was not aware of her own failings; she could not detect herself, how deeply her desire to lead was interwoven with the affection she professed, and really felt, towards Isabel. That desire for power became the bane of her young sister's repose: had Miss Boscawen possessed that power, her kind heart would have ministered in every thing to Isabel's happiness; but, in striving for a poor and useless supremacy, both parties became victims to the struggle.

It was so on this day of pleasure: when they entered the town so long desired, so impatiently anticipated as the scene of matronly pride, Isabel was jaded and disquieted by the miseries of the journey, and Miss Boscawen became doubly impressed by her own complainings, that Bridgnorth would prove a miserable affair. When Mr. Boscawen came forward to assist them in alighting, he was surprised at Isabel's languid appearance, and alarmed at the languor of her voice. Isabel was overcome by her husband's anxious inquiry, his affectionate endearments, and alarms about herself and his child: he stood again before her as her protector from his sister's vexatious remarks, ready to soothe her grief, and

advocate her cause: his presence was a relief—it was a pleasure—she began to feel it was even necessary now to her happiness.

Isabel took Mr. Boscawen's arm when she left the carriage, and clung to it with an involuntary movement of delight: her husband perceived the expression of her eyes, as the warm pressure of her hand turned his looks towards her, and that expression agitated his feelings. He forgot Miss Boscawen, his long companion and housekeeper at Brierly—he forgot the sister who had borne with him the dull routine of twenty years in almost positive seclusion, to enjoy a new and delightful emotion in the certainty of having at last won his young wife's heart. That one absorbing pleasure, so novel, and so delicious, caused Mr. Boscawen to forget the existence of Miss Boscawen and Christobelle, who stood ready to receive his attentions upon Isabel's alighting. He had flown with Isabel up stairs, followed by the nurse and her young charge, and Miss Boscawen's transit took place under the superintendence of the waiter, but, on her part, in profound silence. It was evident a severe blow had been inflicted upon her heart or vanity, by this unexpected movement.

When they entered the apartment destined to

their use, Mr. Boscawen was still offering all his cares and attentions to Isabel. She was arranged most comfortably on the sofa with the assiduity of a lover. It was not Mr. Boscawen watching over the proprieties of an estranged pupil—it was a husband attending to the comfort of a beloved wife.

Christobelle rejoiced in the scene which gave to her view Isabel happy and unreserved in the presence of Mr. Boscawen. She rejoiced to think her sister was loving him as *she* had always loved him—that her studies must in future be as pleasing to her sister, as they had ever appeared to *herself*—that they should now enjoy the dressing-room together, as sincerely as she had formerly abhorred it. Christobelle's countenance betrayed the thoughts of her heart, for Isabel gave her a smiling glance as she gazed upon her; and the annoyances of the journey faded away in the contemplation of her happy, contented position, as she still held Mr. Boscawen's hand, while the babe lay sleeping in her lap.

Miss Boscawen made no remark, by word or look, upon the past and present: her head was thrown more back, and a look of injured innocence pervaded her form and movements; but not a syllable fell from her lips, as she moved

in silent dignity to the table, and seated herself to her employments for the day. Neither Isabel nor Mr. Boscawen yet perceived their sister's wounded feelings: they were both watching their child, and enjoying their newly-awakened interest in each other, by disjointed chat on the part of Isabel, and in little, rather awkward, fond civilities on that of Mr. Boscawen. Isabel, too, had gained another step in intimacy and unreserve: she now addressed her husband as "dear Boscawen," which evidently gave intense satisfaction to its object.

"I shall walk round the Castle Hill with my baby when he wakes, dear Boscawen."

A pressure of the hand, and a look of pleased expression, gave Isabel courage, and raised her spirits to nearly their pristine height.

"I dare say you will go with us, dear Boscawen, won't you? and Chrystal will like to see the babe admired all over the town. You shall have plenty of gingerbread-nuts, dear Chrystal: the darling babe will be so admired. I know you will come with us, Boscawen, won't you now?"

Mr. Boscawen gave a grim smile of acquiescence, and accompanied the smile with a corresponding squeeze of the hand.

“ I declare, Boscawen, you have hurt my poor little fingers,” exclaimed Isabel, with an affected scream.

“ Let me examine them,” said her husband, trying to gain possession of her hand. Isabel withheld it playfully.

“ Oh, no, Boscawen, I declare I gave it you in poor Wetheral chapel : don’t you remember how amused I was, and how I laughed when you put on the ring ?”

“ Would you give it me again as willingly, if we were to renew our vows, Isabel ?” asked Mr. Boscawen, with soft seriousness, as he caught her hand, and stroked it with his long unshapely fingers.

“ Oh yes, indeed I should *now*, because you are so good, and I should not know what to do without you. You know you protect me from” Isabel’s voice sunk into a whisper, which reached her husband’s ear alone ; but her eyes were directed towards Miss Boscawen, who appeared intently occupied with her worsted work. Mr. Boscawen smiled and patted her hand, as if in correction. Isabel went laughingly on.

“ I always like people who love me, but I don’t know how it is, some persons are not pleasant, though they are kind. Mamma was very

kind sometimes, but still, however, I love you, dear Boscawen, very much. I suppose I always liked you, but you frightened me so."

"Frightened you, my love!"

"Oh, yes, you did very much after I was married; you looked so proud and frowning, and then those nasty books! I don't think I quite loved you till you took my part about the cream, and then I *did* begin in earnest: I thought it so good of you; but when you allowed me to dress my child, oh, then how could I help loving you!" Isabel, under the influence of her feelings, threw her arms round Mr. Boscawen's neck, and burst into tears. The action woke her infant. "There, now, Boscawen dear, we have woke the little darling; how could you let me talk in that way, and do such things! I don't know what was the matter with me."

Isabel, in smiles and tears, began the preparation for her child's comforts. The nurse was summoned, and it was fed before her, as she gazed delightedly at its movements: the face and figure of Isabel received its greatest charm from her maternal solicitude. Her enthusiastic nature was interestingly and beautifully illustrated in the devotion of her heart to this one most loved object, and the *insouciance* of Isabel

Wetheral was buried in the deep love of her offspring. Christobelle never remembered her so captivating as she appeared at this moment, when her attention was engrossed in watching her child. The tears of grateful remembrance were upon her cheek, yet smiles were chasing every emotion from her heart, but those of tenderness and a mother's pride. Mr. Boscawen looked on, enchanted. Isabel, in the fullness of her heart, turned for the first time since her arrival to Miss Boscawen.

“ Ah, Tabitha, I am sure you will be one of our party round the Castle Hill, to enjoy my babe's crowing delight. Do put away your work, and join us.”

Miss Boscawen did not look up from her work, as she drily replied, “ No, thank you, sister.”

Mr. Boscawen thought a little promenade would be very pleasant after a long drive, and he joined in his lady's wish that she would attend them.

“ No, thank you, brother.” Miss Boscawen fixed her eyes pertinaciously upon her work : she sat like a wax figure, motionless, and apparently sightless.

“ I am afraid you are ill, Tabitha,” observed

Isabel. "Do let me order you a glass of wine and a biscuit. A glass of wine, dear Boscawen, would not that do Tabitha good?"

"No, thank you, sister."

"A biscuit, Tabitha."

"No, thank you, brother."

Miss Boscawen's answers to many affectionate inquiries were equally laconic. Something was wrong, but the cause was equally unintelligible to her brother and sister. The walk, however, was to take place, and, if Miss Boscawen would not be prevailed upon to add to the little party, she would, probably, be kind enough to put off dinner another hour. This change in the dinner arrangement was met with perfect assent by Miss Boscawen.

"Certainly, brother."

Mr. Boscawen looked earnestly at his sister; but there was no ripple on the surface of the water, to detect its agitation: the voice was dry in its tones, but the eye was placid, and the manner quiet and composed; one strong symptom betrayed the disease within to her brother, and upon that symptom he spoke.

"Tabitha, you are vexed about something — tell me what it is."

"I am not vexed, brother."

Mr. Boscawen smiled. "I am sure all is not right, Tabitha; you have made no objection to a single plan proposed, since we entered this room, therefore, you are not pleased with some one of us."

"I am not displeased with you, brother."

"Then my wife has unfortunately offended you."

Isabel flew to Miss Boscawen. "I have not offended you, dear Tabitha, have I? No one is ever offended with *me* long, for I am so sorry to give offence. A thousand pardons, dear Tabitha, if I have unintentionally hurt you, but what could it be?"

"No, sister, you have not offended."

Isabel was free from offence, therefore her thoughts could dwell upon her child; she did not suspect or observe Miss Boscawen's manner.

"Oh, well, then, let us set off, for I am dying to hear my child admired. Now, Chrystal, you are head-nurse, so attend my babe in front, and I will follow with dear Boscawen, to hear and see every body's admiration. Now, Mr. Boscawen, don't let us linger."

Isabel took her husband's hand, and he suffered her to drag him in her lively playful way to the door. Isabel was becoming the happy

Isabel of former days rapidly. Her sprightly laugh, at that moment, sounded like the joyous tones which had captivated her husband upon their first acquaintance; she was aware of it herself.

“I declare I am laughing as heartily as I used to do, when we were engaged, dear Boscawen, and you look so like yourself when I first saw you, and when you thought all I did was right.”

“I think so *now*, Isabel,” said Mr. Boscawen, drawing her to him, and looking tenderly in her face.

Mr. Boscawen’s person and cast of features could never assume a sentimental expression, but Isabel was equally unsentimental herself. If her husband looked kindly, and behaved indulgently, she was happy; and, while her child continued well, eating his meals heartily, and stretching out his little arms at her approach, no sorrow could reach the heart of its devoted mother. Isabel would forget all grief at the cradle of her darling babe, in whatever form it might assail her.

They were sallying forth from the Crown, when a post-chaise drove rapidly through the north gate, and came with speed towards the inn. For a moment they stood still to watch

its progress. The horses were panting with fatigue, but they were quickly unharnessed, as a well-known voice called out with energy, "Horses instantly to Brierly." It was Thompson.

Christobelle's fears instantly told her she was to receive a summons from Wetheral, but she had spent three happy months with Isabel, and could not in justice complain of its hurried and unexpected arrival. The last letters, however, from Sir John, had not alluded to any such intention. Mr. Boscawen had a powerful presentiment that something was wrong at Wetheral, and they hurried to the side of the chaise. Christobelle caught Thompson's eye.

"Oh, for ever, and two days! Why, that's Miss Chrystal, as I'm alive! Well, Miss Chrystal, you must please to return with me immediately to Wetheral."

Isabel looked bewildered; Mr. Boscawen inquired after the health of Sir John with much anxiety. He was quite well; but Lady Wetheral was suffering, and required her daughter's immediate presence; she was not to delay an hour. Thompson produced a note written by Lady Wetheral, which was to be put into Christobelle's hand the instant Thompson arrived.

“ Dear Bell,

“ The moment you receive this set out, without waiting to pack up your things, for I can't be left a moment. I am very ill, and require one person's whole attention. You have led an idle life for twelve years, mousing in your father's study, therefore, your time is come to be a little active. I miss your sisters dreadfully. I am glad Isabel is happy, and I wish I was so, too ; but your father is getting extremely methodistical, which distracts me. Don't keep Thompson a moment ; you will be here this evening.

“ G. WETHERAL.”

Poor Isabel's day of happiness was changed into mourning, as she stood reading the note over her sister's shoulder. The hope of her heart fell at this announcement into sorrow and disappointment, and they returned into the sitting-room, stunned by the unwelcome summons. Isabel could only lament, and resolve to return home ; she threw her arms round Christobelle.

“ My dear Chrystal, we have been so happy together ! What will my babe do without you ; and what will you do without the babe !”

Christobelle sat weeping, but could not reply to Isabel's touching appeals.

“ Ah, Chrystal, and what will you do for dear

Boscawen's lectures and readings, and when shall we be together again? how you will lament my darling babe! but, Chrystal, don't cry. I know it must be a dreadful blow to leave that darling boy, but I will have his picture taken every month, and send you the old one regularly. I know Boscawen will let me have its picture fresh every month, for he will wish it himself, and you will be so delighted to see its innocent face every month, too. Tell papa I *must* have you every year, and tell Clara that she will be very happy with Sir Foster, when a child is born. Perhaps she won't like being at her studies, any more than I did, but Sir Foster won't plague her after her child is born; be sure and tell her *that*, Chrystal."

Miss Boscawen forgot her injuries for the moment, to comfort Christobelle, when the cause of their grief was explained. Her soothing were more useful and bracing to the spirit. She told her that duties were imperious at home; and she assured her that conscience through life would be tranquil under all trials, by the knowledge that we had been obedient and pleasing to our parents, and, by so doing, acceptable before our Maker, whose commandment it was to "honour thy father and thy mother."

“Oh, yes, Tabitha,” cried Isabel, earnestly; “Chrystal does not mean to sorrow for being recalled on that account. She feels the loss of the dear child, and I can understand the agony of parting with such a treasure.” Isabel took her boy from the nurse’s arms, and pressed it to her bosom. “I can tell what *you* feel, Chrystal, for, if any one took my child from me, I should die on the spot.” The very idea of a separation caused Isabel’s cheeks to turn deadly pale.

Mr. Boscawen appeared, and advised Christobelle to return with Thompson from Bridgnorth, without giving a thought to her clothes; they should be sent after her. He considered Lady Wetheral’s wish peremptory; and, as her anxiety to have her daughter with her was one of Thompson’s particular remarks to him, he had ordered horses to be brought out for the Iron-bridge; the chaise was at that moment ready, and Thompson only waited for her young lady’s presence to return to Wetheral.

The adieus were short. Christobelle was again embraced by Isabel, and received a kind farewell from Miss Boscawen, but she was hurried away by Boscawen, without embracing her little nephew; he feared lest Isabel should suffer by a prolonged view of her regrets. When de-

posited in the chaise, she saw Isabel nodding and weeping, and waving her hand from the window ; her child was placed, too, where Christobelle could see him kicking his little feet, ignorant of his poor aunt's sorrow. Mr. Boscawen said many kind things, which were remembered the following day ; but Christobelle could not heed them at the time they were uttered ; her eyes and heart were at the window with Isabel. She thought her misery could never be exceeded by any of those trials of after-life, which Miss Boscawen alluded to : her heart was broken — her happiness for ever gone. The chaise moved on, and Thompson *tête-à-têted* with her to Wetheral.

The silence was unbroken till the woods of Wetheral roused them into conversation. Thompson would not interfere with her young lady's grief, but allowed her to exhaust its violence in the natural way. Christobelle cried without intermission, till they arrived within a few miles of the castle ; and Thompson, probably, was content to remain silent, in pleasing contemplations of her own approaching matrimony. At last she spoke.

“ Now, my dear Miss Chrystal, cheer up, and think of all you will have to do. Your mamma will not like a sorrowful face, and she is become

very capricious and rough, since Miss Clara married."

"Is mamma angry with Clara?" Christobelle asked, mournfully.

"Oh! for ever, and two days!—angry? not she indeed! but my mistress wants to visit at Ripley—and my master, he won't allow it. She pines very much about it, and gets melancholy; so, as I am engaged to Mr. Daniel, at Hatton, you are to take my place — and a terrible place it will be; for my lady has never spoken to me kindly since I engaged myself to Mr. Daniel, Miss Chrystal."

Christobelle's tears increased at this melancholy picture of her future destiny. Poor Thompson, who always loved her, strove to impart comfort.

"Pray, don't cry so terribly, dear Miss Chrystal, for your papa is always kind and pleasant, and you are such a favourite, you know. My lady, she does give way to whims, as I can testify; but my master, he never was any thing but polite and proper. Mr. Daniel tells me that whims run always in the female line; but he only says that, Miss Chrystal, to plague me."

Christobelle inquired if her father had heard from Anna Maria, or if her sister Julia was still

at Bedinfield. Thompson put her finger to her lip with a mysterious air.

“Miss Chrystal, there is something going on there which I can't make out, neither can Mr. Daniel. My lady, she wrote to invite herself to Bedinfield for change of air, after Miss Clara's marriage, and a letter came in reply from the dowager, which I never made out clearly; for my master, he had a long interview with my lady, and nothing was said about it. My lady wept a good deal, but she never spoke to me upon the subject, which I do not take kindly, for I have always been consulted upon family matters; and Heaven knows, Miss Chrystal, how I held forth upon poor Miss Clara's sweet temper, when you know her best mood would turn milk into vinegar!”

“And Anna Maria?”

“Oh! for ever, Miss Chrystal, what a place that Paris is! Mrs. Pynsent, our young lady that was, writes word they are coming home, for they have not eaten an intelligible thing since they quitted Wetheral. Poor young Mr. Pynsent declares a vixen fox roasted and well peppered, would be far better than the ragouts and frogs he has been obliged to eat since he left old England. Mr. Daniel says, the Hatton

people have sent them an invitation to return there for a time. Mrs. Pynsent, the old lady, has been very low and poorly since her son married, and she spends almost every other day with Mrs. Hancock."

They turned, at this moment, from the high-road into the Wetheral grounds, and Christobelle was obliged to compose her features and heart into something like external tranquillity. She made fearful efforts to banish Isabel and Brierly from her thoughts; she could not think upon the child whom she loved so dearly. She tried to remember alone her father's precepts, and act upon his often repeated cautions, to begin early in life the important task of sacrificing pleasure to duty, and to pray for strength to act uprightly and obediently to his laws. She did pray at this moment; and her earnest repetition of the prayer which he taught her to offer up daily to her parent in heaven, caused some words to escape which reached Thompson's ear. She turned towards her with quickness.

"Well, for ever and two days, Miss Chrystal, if you are not saying your prayers! Don't let my lady hear you going on so, or she will be angry; she called me a methodist the other day with her own lips, because I said just a few

words about Mr. Daniel being a church-going man : and so he is, Miss Chrystal, I assure you."

Christobelle's heart leaped when she saw her father standing upon the lawn, as they drove up the avenue. The happy hours, the quiet delights of his study, his affection for her, his long, solitary readings, while she was absent — all and each pressed upon her mind, and absorbed all thoughts of Brierly. There he stood watching their approach, and smiling upon his child the same benignant smile which ever welcomed her presence into his study : she held out her arms, though she could not reach him ; but the chaise stopped, and she was soon in the parental embrace. How was she caressed and welcomed after an absence of three months !

Christobelle thought there was a change in her father ; but she was too young to discover or dwell upon the cause. She fancied his manner more grave, and his voice was melancholy ; but her attention was attracted to a thousand trifles, and she forgot to gaze upon him. She was listening to all that had occurred in her absence. Christobelle took tea with her father alone, and to him she detailed the happiness she had enjoyed at Brierly ; the odd ways of Miss

Boscawen, the perfect bliss of Isabel : a smile lighted up his countenance.

“ I married Isabel to a good man, and she was certain of happiness : her child is a delightful gift, but her content proceeds from her husband’s temper and principles. Isabel is a warm-hearted girl ; she must be happy with Boscawen.” Christobelle assured him her thoughts were wrapped up in her babe, much more than in Boscawen. Isabel only lived for her child.

“ She may think so,” replied Sir John, “ and you may judge it is so ; but when you have lived a little longer, you will both perceive a woman’s happiness to depend upon her husband’s principles. If he is worthless, she must be miserable ; and children increase the misery, if she loves them. Boscawen is a good man, and Isabel is happy. Be careful in *your* choice, Chrystal.”

“ Oh ! papa, you shall choose for me.”

“ Very well, my love ; if I live, I will be your counsellor ; but if your father is taken from you, beware of marrying for any motive of worldly considerations. Marry with esteem ; and, if you believe a man to be religious, performing his duties as a son and brother with kindness and affection, then love him, for he will deserve

your affection. Beware of marrying for affluence alone ; your fate will be then as Julia's or Clara's fate."

Sir John Wetheral's voice sunk into low, pathetic tones as he concluded, and Christobelle was silent from an awful feeling which stole over her frame, and forbade remark. A tap at the door roused them from the silence of many minutes ; it was Thompson with a message from Lady Wetheral, requesting her daughter's presence. Christobelle looked at her father with alarm ; her hour was arrived, when the things of this world must no longer appear like a vision of beauty ; her life, in future, would be a lengthened chain of annoyances, and she must bend to the destiny which awaited her. She followed Thompson to her mother's apartments, where she had secluded herself since Lady Kerison's marriage, in terror ; but Sir John had smiled upon the movement, and Christobelle could not escape her lot. She was certain of an unpleasant reception, but restrained her tears from flowing. Lady Wetheral was seated near her work-table, upon which six wax-lights stood burning. She looked up.

" Oh ! you are come, Bell : there, sit down,

for I can't bear any one to come near me, heating the atmosphere. I think you are grown tall and gawky with your visit; it's very odd you should be so much plainer than your sisters. I suppose Isabel is very busy with her boy, poor thing! I hope all her children will be boys; girls are great plagues. Your father will not allow me to see poor dear Clara, and there is no settlement made upon her, which worries me to death. Suppose Sir Foster dies, and Clara should become a widow without any provision; I can't be troubled with any of you again. I can't be annoyed with daughters returning upon me, when I have taken such pains to establish them. I am extremely worried about Clara, and my spirits are sinking fast; not a soul to take care of me. Thompson on the eve of marrying! — nonsensical stuff! Servants, of all people, marrying! Daniel can't settle fifty pounds upon Thompson, and so I tell her, simpleton!"

Christobelle had nothing to offer in the way of consolation; she was always under a spell before her mother. Her tone of voice, too, was irritable, and the fear of offending closed her daughter's lips from answering. Lady Wetheral proceeded.

“You are awkward and dumb as ever, Bell:

don't wriggle in your chair, and look so intolerably stupid. I thought Boscawen would have talked or read you into something like ease of manner. I shall be tired to death with your abrupt motions revolving round me. I must make you useful in your influence over your father, Bell; and you must contrive to gain his consent to our visiting at Ripley. Your poor father is become very selfish in many things. I meant to pay a visit of a few weeks to Bedinfield, but the dowager has sent me a letter I can't understand. Your father says the purport of it is to decline my company, but I could see no purport at all. The Pynsents are in France, and I never liked Boscawen; therefore I ought not to be refused my poor Clara's society. This is dreadful seclusion, and I have this little illumination to drive away blue devils. I never see Sir John now; my influence is quite gone."

It was necessary Christobelle should now endeavour to enter into conversation, and assist, as far as lay in her power, to console and amuse the disquietudes of her mother's mind. She, therefore, inquired if it was a true report concerning Anna Maria's return to England.

"Yes, Anna Maria is on the point of returning from Paris, very much against my wishes; she

will be only a secondary person at Hatton, and their complaints are very foolish about that fine city. I think every thing has gone wrong since my daughters married; I have not been well or happy since Clara left me, and never shall be again."

"I hope you will, mamma; I will do all I can to please you."

"What can you do?" replied her mother, quickly, and with considerable irritation in her tone; "you are too young to establish, or to think about it these three years; how can *you* please me? I am declined at Bedinfield by the dowager, who, I am sure, manages her son and his wife, for neither of them added a line to regret my postponement, if it *was* one; but I could not understand it. My daughter Pynsent cannot ask me to Hatton when she returns; she will be a guest herself. I must not see Clara; and if I did, she has no settlement. What pleasure has accrued to me from their splendid matches?"

None, certainly, as far as Christobelle could judge from her mother's complaints, but surely Brierly was a home of happiness; she told her so.

"Brierly may suit *you*, Bell, but what amusement would it be to me? Isabel spoiling her figure and disordering her dress, by carrying a

heavy child about all day ; Miss Boscawen sitting upright like all the generation of old maids ; and Boscawen keeping only a pair of horses, and never entertaining the neighbourhood ! I should be shocked and distressed all day.”

“ They were so happy, mamma ! ”

“ I dare say, Bell : so are the pigs when they have clean straw and plenty to eat. I can't fancy any thing but merely animal enjoyments at Brierly.”

Who could reply to such determined obliquity of reasoning ? Christobelle perceived, indeed, that four splendid matches had failed to produce pleasure to her mother's mind. Each establishment appeared clogged with an evil, which overbalanced their boasted worth and magnificence. Deeply as she coveted, and had laboured for her daughters' wealthy suitors, the affluence of their position could now give no satisfaction. The excitement was over, the objects were attained ; and the disadvantages connected with each were now as fluently expatiated upon as were once their glory and their triumph. All this language of complaint, this unexpected and unfounded source of grievance, pained and dispirited Christobelle. It was ceaseless in its flow, and hurtful in its consequences, to herself.

Lady Wetheral's nature and temper was changed in her daughter's eyes: that agreeable fascination of manner, which so often softened away an abrupt expression, was departed; the playful tone of voice and action, which had so long held powerful influence over her husband's mind, was no more. Her ladyship became secluded and irritable, pining over Clara's banishment, regretting the absence of her settlement, and offended at her own banishment from Bedfordfield, till it became painful to approach her; and Christobelle's spirits sunk under the confinement and terror of her presence. She became ill; and her father's anxiety sought a remedy for the evils she endured, by issuing a pardon to the errors of Lady Kerrison, and admitting the families to a renewal of its ancient association. This proved the signal for domestic peace.

Lady Wetheral, eager to profit from the permission so tardily bestowed, flew immediately to Ripley: the carriage was at the door in a quarter of an hour after peace had been declared; and she quitted her solitary apartments, in the highest apparent health and spirits. During her absence, Thompson appeared before Christobelle,

and begged she would apologize to her lady for a step she felt called upon to take during her lady's absence, for many reasons. Christobelle inquired with surprise to what she alluded.

“ Oh, for ever, Miss Chrystal! I think the fashion of runaway matches is coming into vogue at Wetheral. I have had many conversations with my lady; but, really, they have been of so unpleasant a nature, that I must beg to take French leave, as Miss Clara did. Assure her ladyship, if you please, Miss Chrystal, of my sorrow at being obliged to part in this cursory sort of way; but, as I am engaged to marry Mr. Daniel to-morrow morning, it is useless to argue the affair any longer. I hope, Miss Chrystal, you will do me the honour to call upon me, and take tea, some fine Sunday, with us. We shall always be sensible of the attention.”

Christobelle stared at Thompson's disclosure; but she was dressed for departure, and appeared anxious to be gone. Christobelle said her mother would miss her services, and who was to succeed her in performing those which Lady Wetheral required? Thompson smiled.

“ My dear Miss Chrystal, my lady will not be very much surprised, for I have threatened some time to leave suddenly. I have been baited like

a bull, these two months, about Mr. Daniel; and yet, miss, the church enjoins matrimony to servants as well as other people. Mr. Daniel quotes St. Paul, to prove the thing. However, I decline any more controversy; for, my lady, she loses her temper now: therefore, I shall be much obliged by your informing her of this step.”

Christobelle gave the required assurance, that she would herself name the affair to her mother; and Thompson, after making her adieus, and repeating the pleasure she should feel in receiving Miss Chrystal to tea, quitted Wetheral and its eventful scenes, to seek a new home, and become the property of Daniel Higgins.

Christobelle was reading with her father a scene in Macbeth, when Lady Wetheral entered. She had returned from Ripley; and the extreme paleness of her countenance, her trembling hands, and quivering lip, announced some fearful accident or event. She laid her hand upon her husband's shoulder, and looked in his face, but did not utter a word. Sir John grasped her hands, and bade her be composed; but his lady's distress prevented all utterance for some moments: at length, a deep sob relieved her, and she spoke in hurried accents—

“ John—the brute has beaten her!”

Sir John feared his lady's intellects were shaken by some horrible accident: he again took both her hands, and seated her, beseeching her to gain calmness, and explain the cause of her agitation. Lady Wetheral placed her hand upon her heart, and wept for some time in silence. It was distressing to look upon her, suffering, without possessing a knowledge of its cause, or being able to soothe its violence. A pause ensued, till the paroxysm of weeping relieved her heart, and enabled her to account for the extraordinary emotion. She took her husband's hand, and spoke in broken sentences.

“John, I did not believe Sir Foster's temper was so bad as people represented — I did not think he would use Clara ill; or, indeed, John, she should never have entered Ripley, to be treated like his spaniel — oh, John!”

“Tell me, at once, Gertrude, what you mean,” said her husband, calmly.

“I went to Ripley, John, to give my daughter the delightful information of your having overlooked her little fault; and I entered the sitting-room, where Clara and Sir Foster were quarrelling, oh, so dreadfully! — I was exceedingly shocked — I did not think a daughter of

mine would ever quarrel as Clara did, with her husband—it was so underbred—so very vulgar! Sir Foster swore he would kick Clara, if she persevered in her assertion — it was all about a wretched fishmonger.— Clara persisted, and my child was knocked down before my eyes—I saw my beautiful Clara upon the ground; her features swollen, and her dear face crimson. Oh, John, I never saw such a scene!”

Lady Wetheral again wept, and proceeded brokenly to describe her feelings and continue her account.

“I never felt so distressed and shocked in my life! I had always inculcated the propriety of commanding their temper into my daughters’ minds. I always laid great stress upon the bad taste of making scenes for servants to report and comment upon. I am sure I lectured my girls by the hour, on the necessity of keeping up appearances, and avoiding scenes—public scenes—which the neighbourhood must ridicule. I cannot bear that Clara should become an object of ridicule. What will Mrs. Pynsent say? Nothing can equal my shocked feelings. I told Sir Foster, he was a brute, too disgusting and monstrous for remark or notice from *me*; and I assured Clara, her violence of temper had done little

credit to my instructions, and ruined her appearance most cruelly. My observations were of no avail; Clara persisted in asserting the odious fishmonger was right in his charges, as she raised herself from the ground, and another blow was struck. Oh, John, I left my child bleeding on the ground—neither of them listened to me, or replied to me. What can be done to hush up this dreadful scene, for my cries brought in three footmen? Oh, John, what is to be done?”

Her ladyship's tears again flowed copiously.

“I will go, instantly, to Ripley,” said Sir John, seriously, but calmly. “Chrystal, my love, be ready to accompany me in ten minutes.”

“I shall want Bell to talk to, my love—don't take that great girl with you, every where.”

“I particularly wish to point out to my daughter's notice the misery and crime of connecting herself with a man whose only virtue is the possession of riches, Gertrude. Make haste, Chrystal; the carriage will be round in ten minutes.”

Christobelle flew to her room, and prepared to accompany her father. When she returned to the study, it was empty. Lady Wetheral had returned to her apartments, and Thompson was no longer there to receive and assist her. Chris-

tobelle was on the point of ascending the stairs, to make known her flight, but the carriage was already at the door, and her father called for her. She entered the carriage as her mother's bell rang furiously, but time was too precious for delay; the order was given, and they proceeded towards Ripley with rapidity.

CHAPTER XV.

Sir John Wetheral spoke very seriously to his daughter during their rapid transit : he pointed out the crime of sacrificing principle and content upon earth, to bow to idols which tempted the worst passions of human nature, and gave the soul to mammon. He laid before her notice the fate of those who forgot their Maker's injunction, to care for their soul, and not for the body ; and who strove for earthly things, without considering they could not carry them to that place, where the innocent and upright spirit alone could be triumphant.

Christobelle listened to her father's mild admonitions in silent, pleased attention, and her heart drank in the holiness of the subject, and the justice of his remarks ; but when he changed his tone and subject, to charge himself with negligence, in allowing his lady's influence to prevail

over his better reason—when he took blame to himself for allowing the marriage of Julia, so contrary to his own wishes, to a man so little calculated to make her happy, and prophecied, in melancholy accents, that his grey hair would be brought in sorrow to the grave, by his own unpardonable indolence, and blind affection—*then* she wept to hear him, and pressed his hands to her heart.

“Do not say so, papa — do not die, or what will become of me?”

He smiled at her energy.

“I am not going before my appointed time,” he said, putting one arm round her waist. “I shall not leave *you*, Chrystal, unprotected, whenever that time may arrive, for your mind is stored with those precepts which can mitigate the evils of this world. You have a parent, my child, who is not a fallible father, such as I am, and to Him I commit you, and did commit you from your birth. You were given up exclusively to me, with your poor mother’s consent—indeed, by her expressed wish—and I have endeavoured to lead your mind to those truths which must advance your happiness. I have led you, Chrystal, to the fountain of living waters, and from that fountain you will drink the cup of tribulation, but it

will be sweetened by the knowledge that it came from His hands — that all trials are sent to the good, to see if their faith is sincere, and their patience an abiding trust in Him who gives and takes away. If, Chrystal, your earthly father is taken away, and your home broken up, remember that Father above, and remember that house made without hands, promised to all who walk steadily and faithfully to the end.”

Christobelle’s heart was wrung with the seriousness of her father’s words, and the peculiar tone in which they were uttered : it seemed that he was preparing to leave for ever the home, and the study, which had sheltered her youth from every storm, and had been the scene of their daily and long communion together. If her father was no more, who besides Isabel would cherish his companion, and love her as he had done ? Who would save her from her mother’s irony, and soothe her increasing irritability towards her ? Christobelle became wild with the idea of his early death, and, clasping her hands, cried, “ Oh ! dearest papa, don’t talk so—don’t frighten me, and promise not to leave me.”

“ Nay, Chrystal,” he replied, soothingly, “ do not alarm yourself ; I am here in present health ; and I trust, for some years to come, to be allowed

to watch over you. I *spea*k seriously, because my words will be remembered by you hereafter, when I may not be near to give counsel; and I *think* seriously, because Clara's unhappy marriage may affect her conduct and character: she is too young to escape the contamination of passing her life with Sir Foster Kerrison."

Sir John became agitated as they turned into Ripley Park, and drew near the house which held his unfortunate daughter: he wished to gain firmness with gentleness for the approaching interview, and he muttered several times, quickly, "I hope I shall not forget myself!—God help me, I hope I shall not forget myself!" He was agitated even to nervousness, when they drove past the conservatory, and the bells pealed their arrival; but Christobelle was then too young and inexperienced to be useful, or even to understand the depth of a parent's agony. She followed him in silence to the hall and into the sitting-room, where Clara lay extended upon a chaise-longue, with a bandage round one arm, and a severe bruise upon her eye. She rose, upon their entrance, with self-possession, and, apparently, with utter oblivion regarding the past, for her eyes flashed with angry feelings, and she spoke

only of the present moment, and of her own distress.

“ You are come to witness a pretty scene at Ripley, papa, and to congratulate Sir Foster, of course, upon being the greatest brute in Shropshire. Pray see if ‘brute’ is not legibly stamped upon my arm, and written upon my left eye. Look at this, papa.”

Clara drew the bandage from her arm, and a dreadful sight presented itself: her anger rose as she gazed upon it.

“ If my absence should give *one* qualm to that brute, I would never see his face again; but I will plague his heart out !”

Her father was greatly shocked: he was offended and disturbed by the exhibition of Clara’s temper, but he detested the cowardly violence of a man who could strike a helpless wife, even through extent of provocation: his first movement was to insist upon her return home. “ Return with me to Wetheral, Clara, instantly; I will not see you treated like a slave, or bear that my daughter should be struck down like a dog, by a coward ! Clara, return to your home, and I will tell Sir Foster he shall reach you again through my heart.”

Clara shook her head. “ Papa, I detest Sir

Foster; and I would willingly fly to the wilds of America, if that distance would free me from his brutal presence—but my mother would speak bitterly to me. She drove me to Ripley by everlasting persuasions, and I will not bear her taunts at my return. My mother has done this by her love of high establishments, and I am married! She told me this morning, anger ruined my appearance; but *she* has ruined my happiness. Nevertheless, I'll plague his torpid heart, and torment him by day and by night! He shall feel that I can strike, too, in another way!"

"Clara," cried her father, "let me not hear such dreadful threatenings from a young woman's lips. . . ."

"I will threaten!" interrupted Lady Kerrison, starting to her feet; "and I will do it! Am I to be bearded on every side, without revenge? I am passionate by nature, but I am raging with ill-usage, and I'll torment him—yes, I will retort upon him faithfully!"

Such language from a youthful and beautiful creature seemed to stun her father; and Christobelle stood petrified at such a display of female intemperance. Could this be Clara, her own sister? Was this irritable creature the sister of

Isabel, of Julia, of Anna Maria? As she stood baring her arm, and fixing her eyes upon her father, she looked a Pythoness unveiling future woes and tribulations to the enemies of her country.

Clara was yet standing, when Sir Foster walked into the room, tapping his boot, and humming his usual air : the same smile was upon his lips, and the same vacant expression was upon his features : he nodded familiarly to his guests, as though their parting was but of yesterday, and he sat down in his capacious-cushioned arm-chair as quietly, and with the same enjoyment, as formerly. His eye glanced at Clara, and a chuckling sound proceeded from his throat — the same note of internal gratification which issued in the boudoir, when Lucy Kerri-son detailed his prowess with the fishmonger. Clara understood its meaning, and she pointed towards him with a bitter contempt.

“ There he sits, smiling and curling his audacious lip, as if he was thinking of any thing but cowardice and cruelty ! Would you imagine that man could strike a woman to the ground for upholding justice and right ? ”

Sir Foster winked his eye with the rapidity which denoted observation ; his colour rose at

Clara's remark, but he did not reply. Why did Clara persevere?

“Would you think *that* animal, called a man, ever rose from his dulness to revenge himself upon my person, for affronts he dared not revenge upon a fishmonger?”

Sir Foster was roused: he approached Clara, and held her arm. “Will you hold your tongue, or I'll kick you to the devil!”

“No, I will not hold my tongue: I tell you the man was right—right—right—he was right—if I die saying it! Now, will you dare touch me before my father, coward?”

“Oh, Clara!” Christobelle exclaimed, “do not persist in using provoking words—oh, be like Isabel!”

“I'll be Clara Wetheral,” she replied, indignantly; “I will never submit to tyranny, or crouch to brutality. I would spurn a quarrel about a salmon! Beat a woman about a salmon!—is there a coward upon earth who would dare have acted as this man has done?”

Sir Foster appeared irritated to the top of his bent, and his hand was raised to strike. Sir John Wetheral could be silent no longer; he called to his son-in-law, in piercing tones, “Ker-rison, be a man!” Sir Foster did not touch

Clara — he turned away with a great effort, and resumed his seat ; but he closed his fist, and shook it at his wife.

“ If I don’t wallop you some day properly !”

“ Ay, when the fishmonger returns,” answered Clara, in taunting tones.

The father’s distress at witnessing this scene cannot be described. A parent may feel with him the desolation of heart he endured, as he listened to his daughter’s unadvised and unwomanly railing, and comprehend his deeply-pained, disgusted feelings—but no pen can depict it. He stood for some moments unable to master his emotion ; and, to all appearance, he was bowed down under its influence. Christobelle was sure the effect of this scene would have a fearful result, and that his mind would dwell upon the reckless conduct of Clara, and her future destiny, till his health would suffer. When utterance returned to his opened lips, which had essayed in vain to move, Sir John advanced to Sir Foster, and spoke kindly, but firmly.

“ I have seen a dreadful quarrel between two people, who are my near relations, and who have been married three months : this is a sight, Sir Foster. . . .”

“ Plaguy devil !” muttered Sir Foster.

“I have seen great provocation on Clara’s part, but I beseech you never to lay your hand upon my daughter, as you hope to see your own children happy in marriage.”

“His boys are brutes already,” exclaimed Clara, haughtily.

“Peace, Clara,” replied her father, “and hear me, while I call upon *you*, by the affection I have ever felt, and the kindness I have shewn, to be gentle and obedient to your husband.”

A laugh of contempt broke from Lady Kerri-son. “Yes, papa, obey an hyena, and be gentle to a tyrant!”

“D— me, if I stand this!” cried Sir Foster, provoked beyond endurance, and, seizing a heavy volume from the table, he hurled it at Clara’s head: it missed its aim, and fell at Christobelle’s feet. Clara again laughed contemptuously. Christobelle rose in alarm, but her fears were not for herself; she threw her arms round Sir Foster, in terror, and implored him to overlook her sister’s conduct. She found fluency of speech, as she besought him to bear with her temper, and take no notice of her remarks. She implored him to think of her dear father, and to promise he would never strike Clara, let her conduct be ever so provoking. “Oh, leave the room, Sir

Foster, when Clara becomes angry, but do not throw such dreadful things at her!—do not commit murder in your passion!”

Sir Foster winked his eye during this address, and smiled, but Christobelle could perceive all decorum was banished between them, for he replied with coarseness, “I’ll serve her out, if she jaws in that style.”

It was impossible to interfere with Sir Foster and his lady, when each party forgot prudence and propriety alike. It was but too evident that Clara disdained to conciliate, and that she rendered her husband furious by unfeminine and violent opposition. From the coarse mind of Sir Foster also, that mind which Sir John had deprecated — which his lady had palliated — which every one connected with Ripley deplored — from such a mind, under the influence of provocation, nothing but abusive language could proceed, or violent conduct be elicited. It was therefore incumbent upon Clara to obey the wishes of a man with whom her life must pass away in wrangling, should she oppose his measures. But Clara had never curbed the strength of her passions: her mother’s influence had never been exerted to reach and amend that peccant part, and, as the wife of Sir Foster, those pas-

sions increased to the threatened destruction of her happiness and respectability. It was impossible the present state of things could exist. Sir Foster or Clara must yield in time, and who was to watch the conflict?

Sir John Wetheral placed his hand upon the bell-rope, and waved his hand to demand attention. He besought them to heed his words, ere he rang for the carriage to convey him from a scene which had harrowed up his soul; this was no time for reproach and recrimination; he would reproach no one; he perceived both parties were in fault, and he trusted they would both see their mutual error. "It was grand in a man," he said, "to overlook a wife's failings; her helplessness, her weakness, demanded indulgence, and a woman never looked so lovely in the eyes of God and man, as in her performance of the duties allotted her. He would now depart, firmly believing he was quitting two rational beings, responsible for their breach of vows to a higher authority than himself. He would hope all things; he would hope, nay, he was certain, each party regretted the transactions of the day, and he trusted all remembrance of its bitterness was ended. He must now return to Wetheral."

Sir Foster made no reply in words: he attended to his father-in-law's gentle admonitions, because his usual winking motions and smile evidenced his powers of hearing; but Clara betrayed her withdrawn attention by the half-closed eye and head averted. When her father approached to take leave, she saluted him with affection, and expressed a desire to see him often at Ripley.

“Come very often, papa, pray, and see if I am alive. Don't leave me quite in the power of the brutes around: the five boys are enough to kill a giantess, and the next book thrown at my head may do mischief.”

Oh that propensity to repeat and allude to past disagreeables! Not a shadow of tact had descended to Clara from her mother, to preserve domestic peace. The reckless speech again woke up contention; for Sir Foster advocated his own system of education, by exclaiming,—“Hold your tongue, will you?”

“I shall *not* be silent,” retorted Clara: “don't expect to make me subservient to your vulgar prejudices, as your first wife was compelled to be. I insist upon saying your five boys are like your terriers in every particular.”

The presence of her father checked the action

which would, under other circumstances, have dealt heavy punishment upon the speaker. Sir Foster ground his teeth, but the closed fist attested his intention, and the respect which induced the effort to curb his resentment. Clara saw the effect of her father's presence upon his mind, and madly took advantage of the moment to continue her invectives.

“They are terriers in their features, terriers in disposition, and terriers in their feeding.”

Sir Foster became pale with rage: he was a man of few words, but his wrath was terrible to witness. He called down every imprecation upon his lady's head, and vowed most fearfully to “wallop her” the first convenient opportunity. Sir John hastened Christobelle from the contemplation of such dreadful looks, and from the sound of such horrible words. He withdrew with her as their voices rose high in altercation, and left the scene of turbulence far, far behind.

Christobelle had indeed seen the misery of a match formed upon the baseless fabric of worldly riches. She saw it was unblest and full of woe. Their drive to Wetheral was silent and sad, for there was that upon the father's mind which banished repose. Clara's nature was too fear-

less and too violent to render her an object of esteem, or even to awaken compassion in her lot. Her determined insolence, and contemptuous bearing, towards her husband—her daring manner, and offensive observations, were insupportable to the eye and the ear. It was impossible to advocate the cause of a being, however youth might plead extenuation, who had deliberately and clandestinely married Sir Foster Kerrison, in defiance of her father's strongly expressed objections, yet, in three months' matrimony, dared to the uttermost the passions of her chosen companion for life.

Much as her father sorrowed over his daughter's destiny, he could not uphold her cause; her passions were too powerful, too unrestrained for his interference; he could not upbraid Sir Foster, when he had witnessed the provocation given by Clara, and he could not again offer his home to a disobedient wife. Clara must henceforth be a warning to her acquaintance, a beacon-light to warn them from the perils she had scorned, defied, and sunk under. But who had guided Clara to this perilous position? who had taught her youth to covet wealth, and stake her happiness against title and affluence without reflection?

Oh, mothers! what do you gain upon this passing scene, by bartering your children's welfare for a tinkling sound?—what will you gain hereafter, when the souls committed to your care on earth are required at your hands? Is the atheist, the gambler, the reckless, and blasphemer, to receive them, and become responsible for their lost state at the great account? I tell you it is not so; you have sold their minds to mammon, and you shall answer for that you have received, and have not given back.

Lady Wetheral had discovered Thompson's flight when Sir John and Christobelle returned to Wetheral, and her indignation was extreme. To be left by a menial in that offensive manner was degrading; but that Thompson should have flown from her duties, to enter matrimony, was disgusting. Thompson marrying! and with all the mystery of an heiress too! It was an insult she had not believed Thompson would have presumed to offer; but every thing was wrong, every thing was most wretched since her daughters had married. What was now left to her but poor Sir John, who was half a methodist, and an awkward girl, who was as learned as she was plain? It was very odd her intention to visit Bedinfield had been frustrated. She sup-

posed all her children intended to decline her visits.

With these ideas and feelings, it was not to be supposed Lady Wetheral could be happy; and her disappointed mind preyed upon her health and temper. Christobelle was the victim of this state of things; she could never be sufficiently attentive or sufficiently agreeable; she was tiresome, awkward, or learned; she was to be an old maid, a nuisance in society, an arguing, philosophical excrescence, whom people would avoid and detest; she had not half the sense and conversation of poor, dear Thompson. Christobelle's spirits fled under constant and frivolous exertion of the power of tormenting. She was seated in the boudoir, with Lady Wetheral, one morning at work, not many days after the scene at Ripley; the irritability of her temper was increased by the recollection of former days and former employments. She commenced her usual complaints.—

“I think I am worse in health and spirits when I sit in this room; it puts me in mind of my poor daughters, who are gone. I am now quite deserted and forlorn; not one of them invites me to their home!”

Christobelle mentioned Brierly and the affection of its inmates.

“Fiddlestick, Bell! you are always quoting Brierly! I don’t like Boscawen. I have no opinion of a man who allows his wife to be driven by a pair of horses, when he can afford four—I dislike avarice. And Isabel would make me so nervous, by carrying a great heavy baby about, and disordering her dress! I shall never visit Brierly.”

“The Pynsents will be home soon, mamma.”

“What’s that to me, Bell? You don’t suppose I shall stay at Hatton, and hear Mrs. Pynsent’s remarks about Ripley, and Clara’s folly in coming to an open rupture with her husband? The Tom Pynsents should have accepted Hatton when it was first proposed to them. I shall not visit there till Anna Maria is mistress of the property.”

“But you will go to poor Clara, mamma.”

“What am I to go to Ripley for?—to see my daughter ill-treated, or be treated myself with indifference? Clara had no business to make herself conspicuous by quarrelling. I wish, Bell, when you do vouchsafe to talk, that you would choose better subjects to converse upon. Your poor father’s education has only fitted you to be a nuisance. I hate girls with books in their hands, and dulness on their tongues.”

Christobelle changed the conversation.

“Mamma, your worsted work looks beautiful upon that ottoman; I could almost fancy that rose had perfume, it is so natural.”

“Just the opinion of a girl who follows a man’s occupation, instead of her own feminine amusements: had you any knowledge of work, you would have thought otherwise.” Her mother gave a glance of disdain at the ottoman.

“I assure you, mamma, I understand all the stitches. Miss Boscawen taught me.”

“One old maid teaching another, Bell.”

“I don’t think I shall dislike being single, mamma. Miss Boscawen looks so beautifully dressed, so clean, not at all like your descriptions of old maids.”

“If you had any anxiety to be established like your sisters, Bell, you might please and amuse me in my seclusion. No one comes near me now, not even Miss Wycherly, who was always at Wetheral with Julia. I don’t understand it. You might bring about an intimacy with Frank Kerrison, Bell, and ask him here to read with you. He will inherit Ripley, you know.”

“Mamma, I don’t like Frank Kerrison, he swears so.”

“Nonsense, you matter-of-fact thing: if he

swears now, it does not follow he will always swear."

"But papa says, it is seldom left off. I don't like Frank, he is so violent with his sisters."

"But you would be his wife, not his sister, child. What stupid notions you have!"

The hall-bell rang violently. Lady Wetheral's eyes brightened.—

"Some one has arrived at last to amuse me. I hope it is Penelope come to ask us to her marriage. She ought to do so, for Julia's sake."

The door opened, and Clara entered, to their great astonishment. She seated herself with perfect coolness.

"There," said she, "now let the brute seek me in my father's house!"

"My dear Clara, what brings you to Wetheral? — is Sir Foster with you? — will you dine here?" asked Lady Wetheral, in delighted accents. "I cannot tell you how a little society charms me in this dull place. You have made up that foolish fracas, my love, and you are both come to dine with me: is that it?"

"I am certainly come to dinner, and to sleep too," replied Clara, taking up the work which Christobelle had dropped in surprise. "Where

is your thimble, Bell? I will finish this sprig for you."

"But, Sir Foster, my love—where is Sir Foster?"

"I really cannot say: perhaps, kicking the nurse-maids, as I am not at Ripley to stand in their place."

"Are you alone, then, Clara?"

"I hope so. I mean to be alone for some time."

"My dear Clara, you surely have not been quarrelling again!"

"Again! oh, no! it has been one long-continued quarrel ever since I married!"

"I am really shocked at your conduct, my dear love. How often I have implored you all to avoid scenes when you married! My dear Clara, you must remember my earnest instructions. This is a sad dereliction from good taste!"

"You should not have married me to a brute," exclaimed Clara, becoming impetuous.

"Clara, I was not at your side, when you eloped with Sir Foster," cried her mother, in a vindicating tone.

"Perhaps not; but you may remember the means you took to induce me to elope, mamma.

You did not know the moment; but you were aware of the intention, brought on by your own hints and anxieties to see me at Ripley. Bell can bear witness to your remarks and innuendoes."

"I am sure Bell cannot," replied Lady Wetheral, in alarm.

"Bell can, though! Bell, I charge you to reply to my question. Did not my mother induce me to run away with my brute? Speak truly."

"You cannot say so, Bell," said Lady Wetheral, bursting into tears.

"Bell, answer truly!" and Clara dragged her from her chair, to stand before her. Christobelle struggled to get free; but Clara grasped her with a force she could not resist. "Now, Bell, tell my mother the glaring truth!"

"I will not be questioned—I will not speak—let me go, Clara, let me go!"

"Go, then, stupid fool, too weak to utter the truth!" Clara released her grasp, and Christobelle fled to a distant chair, to remain a spectator of the ensuing scene.

"Clara," said her mother, reproachfully, "what could induce you to blame *me*, for your own impolitic conduct? If I wished to see you the wife of a man standing high in situation, I

never counselled you to forget the proprieties of life."

"You held up Sir Foster to my view, as a match which you prayed for, and desired me never to relinquish," retorted Clara, with passionate energy. "You have married me to a heartless brute, and now you turn against me!"

"No, Clara, I do not deserve that reproach; your temper is too violent for your peace, or mine." Her mother wept.

"I know my temper is like the whirlwind, but you never complained of it, or subdued it! You only bid me conceal it when Lucy came here, till I was actually the wife of a monster! I cannot conceal it now, for it chafes under ill treatment. Oh, if you had but checked it in childhood, to meet this extremity!" Clara grew almost madly passionate and vehement; she threw herself upon her knees before her weeping mother. "If ever my misery exceeds my forbearance, it will be your doing, oh! hard-hearted mother! You have sold me to a wretch who will drive me to desperation, and you must answer for it! My temper is warm—I know it—but any other man would not have made me despise him so horribly. I have provoked him, and I *will* provoke him; but it is your doing, for

I did not understand a man's brutal nature. I thought they were all like my father!"

Lady Wetheral became almost convulsed with agitation. "Ring for Thompson — Thompson, Bell!" Alas! Thompson was no longer at Wetheral; but Christobelle was acquainted with her mother's ways, and brought the usual remedies to her hands. She did not avail herself of their use; her mind was too deeply occupied to heed them: she pushed her daughter aside, without being aware of the action.

"Clara, I never thought a child's reproach would rise against me! I did not imagine a daughter could raise her voice against a parent, who had sought so unceasingly the happiness of her married life."

"In what way, in what way?" demanded Clara, throwing herself on the ground with a movement of despair.

"I secured the luxuries of life to you, Clara."

"Oh, folly, folly!"

"I secured to you a proper position in society, Clara."

"Oh, folly, folly!" continued Lady Kerrison.

"I was anxious to see you enter life, courted, admired, and envied, my dear Clara."

"*Who* admires and envies me?" cried Clara,

starting to her feet. “ *Who* envies my situation, or would change places with such a wretched creature? By the Heaven which witnessed the sacrifice of my youth and hopes of happiness, I would willingly exchange with the humblest woman who breaks stones for her daily bread, and devours it in peace! Oh, Chrystal, never marry while you live!”

The exertion of complaint, and the powerful passions which warred in the soul of Clara, exhausted her strength after this vehement exposition of her suffering; and she lay upon the sofa, like a child who had sobbed itself into silence. It was a solemn sight to see so young and fair a creature, so deeply engaged in the strife of passion and contention; the expression of her countenance was already tinged with angry feelings, and her beautiful mouth was losing its attitude of repose: if such was Lady Kerrison’s vehemence of character at this early period of her marriage, what would become of her in after-years?

Clara fell into a doze, which continued till the hall-bell again announced a visiter. Lady Wetheral, also, endeavoured to acquire a composure which would not appear at her call; Lady Kerrison’s reproaches had startled and de-

stroyed her tranquillity. Her hands trembled under their efforts to resume their occupation, and sighs burst from her bosom. Christobelle was glad the bustle of a fresh arrival drew near the door, to divert her thoughts from her sister's sorrow. Clara started from her sleep, at the sound of approaching voices, and rose from her couch. The servants announced Sir Foster Kerison.

Sir Foster walked fiercely towards his lady, without taking notice of Lady Wetheral or Christobelle, who stood amazed, as he advanced to the sofa; he did not even wink his eye. Clara remained in haughty expectation of his address, her head thrown back, and her eye flashing defiance. "Now, sir, are you come to beard me at Wetheral!" was her indignant exclamation; "are you come here to prove how brutally you can treat a woman, even in her father's house?"

"Go home!" cried Sir Foster. "Go home this instant!"

"I will never return, if there is a roof elsewhere to shelter me!" returned his lady. "I am weary of existence under a tyrant's power."

"You won't? who is master at Ripley?" Sir Foster raised Clara in his arms, and, in spite of her resistance, he was carrying her from the

boudoir. Lady Wetheral endeavoured to interfere; she besought Sir Foster not to commit himself before the servants—before the world—by using force towards his wife; but he heeded not her observation, or her prayer. Clara was borne into the hall, unable to contend with the grasp which detained her prisoner. In vain she screamed, “Oh, father, my father, save me!” he was not within hearing. In vain she vehemently threatened to plague her husband, till life should be a burden to him: Sir Foster made no reply. Before the household, who assembled at the piercing cries of Lady Kerrison, before the Ripley servants, who were stationed with the carriage, did Sir Foster bear his lady to the hall-door, and, ordering his footmen to their post, Clara was placed in the carriage by main force. She struggled violently to regain her liberty, but her delicate limbs were unequal to the conflict; she sank back almost fainting with her useless efforts; and, Sir Foster taking his place by her side, nodded and winked, and chuckled, as he exclaimed, “Done it well, by Jove! Jerry, drive like winking!” The Ripley carriage dashed furiously down the avenue.

Lady Wetheral felt intensely the publicity which accompanied Sir Foster Kerrison’s re-

sumption of his wife's society. The action itself was disagreeable — must be most offensively disagreeable to Clara — but the manner of the thing, the public display which surrounded the whole affair, was inexcusable! It was beyond a doubt now, the affairs of Ripley were discussed in the servants' halls and dining-rooms throughout the neighbourhood — a most horrible idea! People might be as unhappy as they pleased, and quarrel whenever they felt inclined so to do, but it was an offence against society, to perpetrate little misunderstandings before the world. Nothing could be in such wretched taste. Clara was very foolish and impolitic to irritate a man like Sir Foster, and blame her for the results. She had always cautioned Clara and the rest of her girls against scenes.

The remembrance of her salutary cautions, however, did not operate upon Lady Wetheral's nerves, or bring calmness to her mind. Clara's words rang in her ears; and her figure, as she knelt in the attitude of upbraiding, glided before her eyes. She could not forget those piercing expressions, "If ever my misery exceeds my forbearance, it will be your doing, oh! hard-hearted mother!" The voice sounded through the

house, it followed her into the dressing-room; she complained to Christobelle that it would haunt her in her sleep, and that her death would be caused by filial ingratitude, after all her anxieties to promote her child's welfare. "I am sure these scenes are enough to destroy me, Bell, and I think Thompson might have spared her part in the transaction. She made my dose of sal-volatile exactly to my taste, and now in my extremity I dare not touch your mixtures, for I dare say they would excoriate my throat. Mrs. Bevan will never be what Thompson was; she looks perfectly bewildered when I require any thing. Clara has killed me: ingratitude is, indeed, hard to bear, and it will disgust me from making any further sacrifices on my own part for others. I shall not concern myself with your marriage, Bell. Marry whom you please; but, if you marry less well than your sisters, never come into my presence." Christobelle promised never to marry without her concurrence.

"So you all say, and act in defiance when opportunity offers. Say nothing to your father, Bell, about Clara; it was lucky he rode to Shrewsbury this morning; he would have laid the blame upon me, too; he always lectures me

now: say nothing about it, pray. What is that?" Her ladyship started. "Oh, it is that ungrateful voice; it spoke quite plain to me! I am sure I shall have a nervous attack, if that voice haunts me."

Clara's reproaches had sunk deeply into Lady Wetheral's heart, though she affected to carry off this impression with bravery of manner. In vain she took repeated doses of camphor-julep to still her nerves, and recover a portion of her spirits; the trembling of her limbs increased, and she acknowledged it would be impossible to meet poor Sir John at dinner; Christobelle must take her place, and invent any excuse she pleased for her absence, so that the truth was concealed from her husband. She was on no account to hint to him the transactions of the morning. It was fortunate for Christobelle that her father made few comments upon his lady's illness during their solitary meal; but his disposition was perfectly free from suspicion or curiosity, and conversation turned upon other subjects. Christobelle was delighted by one piece of intelligence on his part. The Tom Pynsents were to arrive in England the following week. Mrs. Pynsent and Mrs. Hancock were in Lewis's shop, and they informed him of their instant re-

turn to Hatton. Paris had not amused Tom, and he was longing to return to England; they had even come to the resolution of never again quitting Shropshire. Mrs. Pynsent was full of bustle and happiness at the idea — she would now get Tom back, and thank God all his dogs were in fine condition—not a puppy lost. Tom would find every thing as he left it, and Sal Hancock must be off to Lea. Mrs. Hancock winked her eye at her sister's remark.

“I tell you what, Pen, Tom will know a thing or two, when he comes from France; ten to one but I get into fashion this time.”

“You be hanged, Sally Hancock!”

“They are not so whitewashed in France, Pen. I'll make a good bet our Tommy has had a ‘cherry amy’ by this time.”

“None of your surmises, Sally Hancock; you know I can't bear any thing said about Tom. I'll be hanged if I take you home for that fib!”

“Faith, you must carry me somewhere, Pen,” replied Mrs. Hancock, coolly; “you can't leave me and my game-leg here.”

“Hold your tongue, then, about Tom and ‘cherry amys.’”

Sir John thought it was time to make his bow to the ladies, and he quitted the shop, leav-

ing the sisters in high altercation. The quarrels of Mrs. Pynsent and Mrs. Hancock were fortunately as short as they were frequent and public. Ten minutes after Sir John's departure from Lewis's shop, he saw Mrs. Hancock upon her sister's arm, walking with great difficulty and in apparent pain; but both ladies were laughing immoderately, and attracting the notice of the passers by from the loudness of their conversation.

Christobelle trusted that Tom Pynsent's return would operate advantageously upon her mother's spirits, and assist the recovery of her tone of mind, which appeared sinking. She could not understand the extraordinary change which had taken place in a person naturally so active and lively. It appeared as though Clara's marriage had acted as a sedative upon her mental and physical energies, and numbed their vigour. She had sunk rapidly into a nervous, solitary being, unequal to every exertion, indifferent to her husband's society, and dead to all resources. Yet was Sir Foster Kerrison the long-coveted object of her wishes, and every thought of her heart had been given to the accomplishment of that most desired union. Clara married Sir Foster, and obtained Ripley. What then caused

this lassitude of body and mind? this melancholy exhibition of energies unemployed? of time heavily passed in dull complaining, and nervous misery? Her daughters were highly and wealthily established; and her views for each had been promptly and successfully fulfilled.

What *could* produce such a fearful change in the graceful Lady Wetheral, once, and so lately too, the gayest of the gay; ever animated, ever pleasing, even to those who knew and feared her matrimonial speculations? Because, all that was triumphant had fled;—because all that was most exciting had passed away. The hopes and fears which had given zest to life were unfortunately at rest, and there was nothing now to lead on the energies, and compel exertion. The cause was withdrawn, and the effect was fatal to a happiness which consisted in ceaseless anxiety to procure establishments for her children. All solicitude was now ended, and the mind sank, unemployed, into listlessness. Every thing became gloomy in its routine; every thing was conducted in its usual daily forms, but there was no longer the spirit which gave animation to ceremony. The shadow still remained, but the substance had departed, which threw a mantle of gaiety and brilliance over the proceedings of Wetheral Castle.

CHAPTER XVI.

Nothing could exceed Tom Pynsent's pleasure at beholding himself again in England, and at Hatton. The Wetheral party were summoned by the warm-hearted, affectionate mother to attend the arrival of her son, and rejoice over his "second birth;" and a large party of relatives were invited to dine at Hatton, and celebrate his return. Mrs. Pynsent particularly desired Christobelle might appear upon the occasion. She thought the young ones had suffered enough in the matrimonial line; and, as that "poor bit of a girl was not old enough to be hawked after the men," she thought the lanky thing ought to be allowed to enjoy herself for a few years, and begin her pleasures by rejoicing over Tom's arrival. Sir John Wetheral decided that Christobelle should accept the invitation; and his lady offered no objection, though her daughter could not feel gratified by her remarks.

“ Oh! go, by all means, Bell, as Mrs. Pynsent wishes you to meet Anna Maria. You and your father, of course, must hunt in couples; your tastes are so similar and so agreeable. I am much too nervous to join that coarse party. Of course, Mrs. Hancock will be there; I cannot sit in Mrs. Hancock’s company. Anna Maria will come to see me some early day. I must beg of you not to colour up so vulgarly, when any one addresses you, and try not to sit down to any one’s table so hungry and thirsty as you manage to do at home. Pray, eat a meal before you set off, to prevent that dreadfully famished look, Bell.”

“ I am always hungry with exercise, mamma.”

“ Nothing can be so insupportably in bad taste. I shall not be at Hatton to shudder under your voracious *exposé*, but I shall imagine you committing a thousand errors. I hope the Farnboroughs will not be present to observe my youngest daughter. I suppose I must be content to remain solitary, and submit to Bevan’s attentions for that day. My daughters marrying so early has left me a poor, solitary being.”

Christobelle was anxious to be useful, and she tried to look cheerful, as she exclaimed—

“ I will remain at home then, mamma, if you please.”

“ Not as a *companion*, Bell. I cannot fancy you presume to offer yourself as my companion. Oh, no! go with your father, by all means.”

Christobelle was accustomed to be treated with petulance; it was vain to hope for any change for the better, and her delight at the idea of her visit sheltered her heart under this blow. How wearying it was to endeavour to please, and yet to prove ever unsuccessful! But the visit to Hatton would balance much annoyance: she looked forward with intense eagerness to the first dinner engagement which had varied her existence; and she felt doubly grateful that her first appearance in public should take place without the fearful accompaniment of her mother's presence. Her father was sure to be kind and encouraging. How slowly did the days appear to pass by, ere she could be dressed for the festivities of Hatton!

A select number of friends assembled at Hatton on the eventful morning of Tom Pynsent's arrival. Sir John Wetheral and Christobelle arrived first, and the Wycherlys, Charles Spottiswoode, and Mrs. Hancock followed in their own order. *They* were allowed to witness

“Tom’s” re-entrance into Hatton — they alone were to witness the restless joy and expectation which revelled in Mrs. Pynsent’s heart and eyes. None other possessed a claim to intrude upon her son’s happiness, or divide with herself the first words, the look, and the affectionate embrace of her only child.

Mrs. Pynsent wandered round the rooms, and perambulated the Hall, as the time stole on towards the expected moment of meeting. The hounds were stationed in the park, with the whipper-in, to greet their master and do him honour, by baying deep and loud as he drew towards his home. The men were arrayed in their hunting costume by Mrs. Pynsent’s desire, that her own dear boy might be surrounded by all he best loved, in the style he most approved, “for, married or unmarried, her Tom would love the dogs and his old mother to the end of time.” Mrs. Hancock sat silent and quiet till her sister’s restless movements roused her attention.

“I say, Pen, you’ve got the staggers.”

“How can I be still, Sally Hancock, when I am expecting Tom? I can’t sit like Bobby, there. Look at Bobby, sitting with his legs

crossed, and his face as calm as if Tom was no son of his."

Mrs. Hancock winked upon the company as she called out to Mr. Pynsent: — "I say, Bob Pynsent, Pen may have—"

Mrs. Pynsent turned quickly upon her sister.

"Sally Hancock, you be quiet now. You know Tom and Bobby, too, won't endure your jokes. If you begin joking, you will be sent back to Lea before Tom arrives."

Mrs. Hancock was not in the least degree ruffled by the threat.

"None of your great guns, Pen. I'm as silent as a mouse. I thought I should never be silent again though, when we caught Charley Snooks in the booth that race-day."

"Sally Hancock, what things you do remember! Shall we ever forget squeezing into the pit of the play-house, and finding Polly Sydenham twigging us from the side-box?"

Again both sisters were plunged into a recital of past levities, and were laughing immoderately, when the hounds sent forth their cry, and ran in full chase round the swell of the park which fronted the entrance to Hatton. They were laid on the scent of a red-herring, which had been previously dragged round the

knoll, the moment the travelling-carriage entered the lodge. This was Mrs. Pynsent's particular command. She was resolved to celebrate her son's arrival in a manner most consonant to his tastes and feelings, and her heart prompted this mode of testifying her delight at his return. The cry of the dogs was a signal to rush towards the hall-door, and Tom Pynsent was waving his hat, and tally-hooing with all his might, as the carriage tore up the serpentine road from the lodge-gates. Mrs. Pynsent was in ecstasies of joy.

“ Here, hallo, Bill ! fetch your master's horse out in a minute ; he has been saddled these two hours. I know what my Tom will do ; his old mother knows him well. Jack Ball ! off with you, and turn the colts into the park. Stir along, boys ! Look at him—bless him ! Come, Sally Hancock, let us have a cheer for Tom.”

Sally Hancock was nothing loth ; she shouldered her stick with the air of a corporal, and both ladies startled their companions by uttering a loud and protracted huzza. Tom Pynsent answered the shout. His body was half way through the carriage window, as he continued waving and hurraing to the scene before him. At last the carriage drew up, and Mrs. Pynsent's

arms once more encircled her darling son. She hung round his neck entranced.

“My blessed Tom, my only and sweet boy, your poor mother is happy to get you back again. The dogs and colts, Tom, are well; the hounds all well, my Tommy. Your poor mother has looked well after them. And there’s your father, waiting, Tom, to shake hands—and here’s Sally Hancock!”

Mrs. Pynsent withdrew her arms reluctantly, and her son advanced to shake hands with his father. Mr. Pynsent’s mild countenance shone with pleasure as he congratulated him upon his return, and confessed how much he had missed his society. Tom Pynsent was in tearing spirits at finding himself upon Hatton ground, listening to affectionate speeches delivered in pure English again. He shook hands with every one, and saluted every lady.

“How do you all do? How do you do, my fat aunt, Hancock? How do you do, Pen? Why, Spottiswoode, have you waited for me to be your bridegroom’s man? How do you do, Sir John? I have brought home my little woman, quite rosy, you see—here she is. So, little Miss with the long name, how are you? Upon my soul, you all look ‘grass!’” Tom

Pynsent held his hand to his mouth, and turned again to the hall-door.

“ Tally-ho, there !—bring ’em round, Barton !”

The saddled horse was trotted up, and Tom Pynsent sprang upon his back. He waved his hand to the company.

“ I use no ceremony.— One gallop round the park, and I’ll be amongst you again. Tally-ho, there. Tally-ho !”

The mettled steed plunged and reared under the tightened rein, while his master spoke ; but, in an instant, he dashed from the door, and the horse and his rider were seen flying down the park, followed by the whole complement of dogs and attendants. Mrs. Pynsent gazed after her son with proud delight.

“ I say, Bobby, there he goes ! Didn’t I tell you he would love to see his dogs round him ? Bless him, his mother knew his tastes. There’s his little wife gone off with her father ! She does not stay to look at Tom. *She* doesn’t care for his whims, Sally Hancock — how should a Wetheral care for any thing ? — I don’t, and I can’t, abide a woman who is indifferent to Tom’s whims ”

“ Don’t mob the Wetherals, Pen ; it’s only the old lady : *they* can’t help their mother.”

“How well Tom sits a horse!” continued Mrs. Pynsent, who could not withdraw her eyes, or mind, from one object, for a moment. “There he goes, neck or nothing!”

Mr. Pynsent reminded his lady that Anna Maria was in the drawing-room, and that she had scarcely welcomed her. Mrs. Pynsent snapped her fingers.

“Tom is my son, and I’ll attend to no one till he returns. Pen is with the young woman. I won’t stir till Tom comes back. If the young woman loved Tom as I love him, she would be watching him in his delight there, looking so handsome and happy! I don’t like her for leaving Tom!”

Mrs. Hancock was quite of her opinion, and Mrs. Pynsent was softened by her coalition.

“Sally Hancock, you shall dine here, to-day, if you will promise to be quiet.”

“Now, Pen, what do I *ever* say?”

“I am afraid of you, Sally Hancock. You know Tom and Bob won’t bear your remarks. You know you never were fit for ladies’ society, after you married that Hancock.”

“What was the matter with Hancock, except he was tipsy or angry, Pen?”

“ Will you promise to be quiet, if I ask you to stay dinner, Sally Hancock ?”

“ I’ll try for it, Pen.”

“ I believe you must return to Lea, after all, Sally Hancock. Tom will be very angry : he can’t endure your remarks.”

“ Fiddle diddle, I’ll be very good, to-day : I will, *indeed*, Pen.”

Christobelle lingered at the hall-door, to enjoy the cheering sight of the hounds, and to watch Tom Pynsent’s enjoyment. When that display was lost to her view, she flew again into the drawing-room, and seated herself at Anna Maria’s feet. Christobelle gazed at her sister, and fancied four months’ absence had affected a change. Mrs. Tom Pynsent spoke with volubility, and her manner was less timid and pleasing. A very high colour was upon her once pale cheeks, and her eyes were unnaturally bright and sparkling : altogether, Christobelle thought her sister Pynsent very much changed. When she had again received a salutation from her lips, and a brief compliment upon her growth and appearance, Anna Maria continued her discourse.

“ Oh, I liked every thing exceedingly at Paris, as far as society was concerned : every thing eat-

able, shocking—but the Count de Nolis assured me the march of improvement had begun, and would be very evident when he returned. Tom did not like Paris. He felt the want of sporting, and those sort of noisy pursuits which are disgusting to the Parisians. The Count de Nolis introduced us to many delightful French families. I must confess I did not like it at first, but I was sorry to quit Paris. English customs are so wearisome, after the ease of French society !”

Sir John Wetheral looked surprised at Anna Maria’s sentiments, and he glanced his eye upon Christobelle with an anxious expression, as she sat gazing at her sister. Miss Wycherly was entertained beyond expression by the change in her manners, and amused herself by calling forth Anna Maria’s remarks. She inquired who the Count de Nolis was, who figured so much in their train.

“ The Count ! Oh, the dearest and liveliest creature you ever saw. He is engaged to pay Tom a visit, or rather myself, for I don’t think Tom liked him. He will visit us in the autumn. I have been obliged to bring a French maid home, to dress me, because a lady’s maid here is only fit to dress an English woman.”

“ Have you renounced the title of English woman, Anna Maria?” asked her father, gravely.

“ No, indeed, papa. I shall always be English ; but Félicé has such a way of blending colours, and making up dresses !—You shall judge for yourself. Is there a party, to-day, at dinner ; or, are we to have a *soirée* ?”

Mrs. Pynsent and her son entered the room, followed by Mrs. Hancock, as Anna Maria spoke. Tom Pynsent advanced to his lady.

“ Well, little woman, chatting away !— Do you see, Sir John, how rosy we are by our trip ? I wish you could have seen her talking and chirping to De Nolis. You would have been surprised.”

“ My heavens ! what a couple of painted cheeks !” exclaimed Mrs. Pynsent, in a tone of horror.

“ A couple of what ?” cried her son, quickly. Anna Maria became perceptibly distressed : her husband surveyed her with looks of perfect satisfaction and admiration, entirely unconscious of the cause of her agitation.

“ Yes, she is rosy enough now, bless her ! I am glad France has done such wonders for my wife : she looked as healthy as the best of them in Paris. De Nolis advised her to rouge at first.

No, none of that, says I. No wife of mine shall paint, like Jezebal. I was right, you see, for her cheeks soon grew blooming as a rose—didn't they?" he added, chucking her under the chin.

Miss Wycherly smiled. Anna Maria recovered her self-possession, and began a tirade against English costume, without answering her mother-in-law's observation. She spoke so much more rapidly than "Miss Wetheral" had ever spoken. She seemed to have acquired so much alertness of speech and manner—so much forwardness in making remarks—her eyes were so bright, and her cheeks bore such a deep *couleur de rose*, that Christobelle sat in fixed attention, watching her movements. She thought Anna Maria remarkably improved in person; she admired the vivacity of her countenance, and manner; but she was no longer the simple and elegant Anna Maria, so gentle and so mild—that many opinions had decided her to be insipid. Every one appeared watching her with nearly equal surprise and attention. Mrs. Pynsent stood with her arms akimbo, and her eyes rooted upon her son; but the others were all earnestly listening to Mrs. Tom Pynsent, as she commented upon the dreadful *tournure* of the English fashionist.

"I assure you, Penelope, you could discern

an Englishwoman the instant she appeared in the street. Her walk is firm and good, but her shawl and bonnet is only English. I had such a lecture from De Nolis! He made me put aside all my Shropshire habiliments, and I was obliged to be entirely refitted by Le Boi."

"Well, by Jove!" cried Tom Pynsent, "that was not *my* doing: De Nolis was the ladies' favourite, and he turned my little wife's head about dress. I liked her just as well in her stout silk pelisse, that put me in mind of Wetheral and Shrewsbury."

Anna Maria playfully placed her hand upon her husband's lips.

"Do be quiet, Tom, and don't be so very English."

Tom Pynsent kissed the little hand which enforced silence, and held it in his own capacious palm. Anna Maria drew her chair closer to her husband, and, leaning her head against his side as he stood near, continued her discourse.

"Upon my word, papa, I liked Paris dearly, but Tom complained of this, and disliked that. He would not eat his dinner, because it was stewed frogs; he said he would not eat frogs—he would not drink sour wine—he would not do any thing to be comfortable."

“I wanted to come home in a fortnight,” said Tom, still playing with his lady’s hand; “but my little wife would not listen to me. De Nolis and herself led me a pretty dance, I can tell you. Hang me, if I understood their jargon in Paris, and I only knew Jack Smith, and Tom Biddulph, to talk with. Spottiswoode was at Florence; De Nolis jabbered away every where with my wife; while I and Jack amused ourselves with quizzing Biddulph. My wife had never any leisure to write home, or talk to *me*.”

“My dear Tom!”

“No, I vow you were always laughing and talking with that French fellow, and his cursed broken English.”

“But who ever saw me without *you*, Tom? and what pleasure should I have had, if you had not been close to me?”

Anna Maria clasped her husband’s hand with an air and manner so affectionate, that all hearts present felt assured of her domestic happiness. Her father’s expressive face became enlivened, and Mrs. Pynsent almost involuntarily gave Anna Maria a startling slap upon her shoulder, as she cried,—

I’m a happy woman, since my Tom is loved by us all alike. I tell you what, young woman,

I fancied you could not love my son, because you did not remain to witness his delight with the hounds; but now, I see you *do* love him, though you will never understand his old mother's fondness."

Anna Maria started at the blow, but she held out her hand to Mrs. Pynsent, and assured her every one must love Tom who lived with him. He had lingered in Paris against his will to please *her*. He had suffered every disagreeable annoyance in silence to give *her* satisfaction; and Tom had never objected to any whim or amusement required by herself. How then could she do otherwise than love him beyond every earthly creature?

Tom Pynsent looked all astonishment during the dialogue which passed between his wife and mother. It did not occur to him that his Anna Maria's love was less sincere than his mother's affection: and as to his wife's recapitulation of his virtues, "Who the devil married a woman unless he meant to indulge her?"

This little scene, and Anna Maria's public testimony in favour of her husband's kindness had great effects, however, naturally and unsuspectingly as it had been spoken. Mrs. Pynsent was charmed by her daughter-in-law's simple

and affectionate statement, and she was the head-piece at Hatton. From that moment every good feeling was enlisted on Anna Maria's side by Mrs. Pynsent; and her fondness for her daughter threatened to equal the affection she bore her son. She told her sister, Hancock, Anna Maria might paint her cheeks as scarlet as the Babylonian woman's gown if she liked, *she* would raise no objection. She cared for nothing but Tom, and if his wife loved him and made him happy, she might paint and talk of that Frenchman as much as she pleased.

The dinner-party appeared to Christobelle's eyes the *ne plus ultra* of human happiness. She was attended to by every person; and no one appeared startled by her awkwardness, or the vulgarity of her manners. Lady Wetheral's searching eye was not present; her severe remarks did not sound in her ear, and she enjoyed profound peace of mind and body. No subsequent dinner-party ever equalled that day in its effects upon her head and heart. She sat between her dear father and Charles Spottiswoode, enjoying their conversation, and looking upon happy faces. Miss Wycherly's lively spirits were ever amusing, and her spirited dialogues with her cousin Tom appeared to Christobelle to be the

concentrated essence of wit and cleverness : she laughed unrestrainedly and joyously throughout the evening.

Sir Foster Kerrison and Clara were among the dinner guests, with Lucy. Clara's expression of figure and countenance was that of extreme hauteur, and she did not look at, or address Sir Foster during the evening. Sir Foster himself had regained his usual "*far niente*" since his last appearance. When the gentlemen returned into the drawing-room upon the summons to tea, Sir Foster deposited himself in an arm-chair, without addressing any of his neighbours. He looked on the amusements and the different groupes with a smile, as he sat stretched to his utmost length ; his eye winked with tolerable rapidity, and a subdued chuckle every now and then evinced that his mind received pleasure from some part of the conversation which reached his ear at intervals. Clara alone preserved a haughty silence to all, and appeared cold and indignant. Lucy Kerrison, whose age approached nearest that of Christobelle, sat by her after tea, and confided to her hearing the miseries of Ripley.

"I declare, Miss Wetheral, Ripley is more solitary and disagreeable than ever. Papa and

Clara do quarrel so dreadfully, that we cannot expect any one to come near the house." Here Lucy lowered her voice. "There was such a scene the day papa brought Clara away from Wetheral! Oh! Miss Chrystal, what dreadful things they said to each other! Papa, you know, is very violent, though he looks so still and quiet, and Clara was very provoking. Papa struck her once, and yet she would not be silent; she was very insolent, and papa threatened to turn her out of the house before the butler. It was very dreadful. Well, Clara ran away, and papa, you know, brought her back. Good gracious! how Clara did abuse him in the hall before all the servants! Papa only laughed then. I assure you they quarrelled this morning worse than ever; papa forgets as soon as it is over, but Clara keeps worry, worry, worry, till another quarrel is begun. I wish some one would ask me to stay with them: Lady Wetheral promised to have me with her; but I have never been asked since Clara married papa."

Christobelle mentioned her mother's illness, and her lowness of spirits.

"I am very sorry. Ripley is nothing now but a scene of quarrels. I was not aware of Clara's temper at Wetheral. I fancied her

quick-feeling, but not violent. I assure you she makes papa worse, by her provoking manner and her determination to have the last word. What can it signify who has the first or last word in a quarrel?"

Christobelle was equally surprised at Lucy's description of Clara's talents for tormenting. She knew her disposition was very warm, and that she could be roused into violence; but she had never evinced a disposition to provoke. Christobelle had always considered her too proud to descend into wanton provocation, and too indifferent to her husband, to endure altercation after the cause had passed away, which provoked resentment. Clara's worst feelings were perhaps roused into action by Sir Foster's violence. Had her good genius interfered, to prevent the unhappy union of two beings so ill suited to each other, Clara had been a happier and better woman, and Sir Foster a more respectable and intelligent neighbour and friend. Christobelle looked at Clara as Lucy proceeded in her remarks, and could perceive her brow lowered, and her handsome mouth compressed. The cause of the morning's quarrel, as detailed by Lucy, was indeed frivolous, and wretched in its folly.

“ That horrible fishmonger was at Ripley this morning, and Clara began vexing papa with the old affair over again — good gracious ! how she did irritate him ! Well, papa never forgets to revenge himself at the moment, so he went into the servants’ hall, and brought a large fish into the sitting-room — goodness, how it smelled ! Papa chuckled very much, so I knew he was preparing for mischief ; and he threw the creature into Clara’s lap, upon her beautiful silk dress — upon my honour ! Clara told him he was a brute, too brutish for his own servants’ hall ; and there was such a dialogue ! I ran away ; but the servants listened at the door, and heard it all. Pelham says it was a proper Billingsgate on papa’s side, and only just ‘ over the way ’ on Clara’s part. Papa has forgot it now ; but Clara will remember it for a month to come.”

This was a sad prospect : Clara, so young and inexperienced, was already wedded to dissension, and beginning her young career of life in bitterness ! Clara, full of spirits, and energy of character, was deepening the shades of evil, by an unwomanly and improper contention with the husband she had chosen against her father’s wishes. What must be the consequence of powerful passions constantly in collision between

Sir Foster and Lady Kerrison, since their early matrimony was so discordant? Miss Wycherly spoke anxiously and feelingly upon the subject to Anna Maria.

“This is a fearful match, my dear Mrs. Tom, and Ripley will be the grave of your sister’s respectability. The Kerrisons’ quarrels are already the topic of conversation at every table where your family are not present. Can you advise Lady Kerrison to be patient? — will she bear any interference?”

Anna Maria hoped all things, when they were more settled at Hatton. Tom would perhaps interfere a little, and if any one could bring things about, she was sure it would be Tom, he had such a peculiarly agreeable manner. She would speak to Tom upon the subject.

Clara’s eyes glanced towards the groupe, and she rose to join them.

“What are you all chatting about so earnestly?” she observed, as they made room for her. She seated herself between her sisters. “Go on with your subject: what was it?”

Miss Wycherly answered for all.

“We were talking of matrimony, Lady Kerrison.”

Clara's eyes sparkled with a thousand fires, as she slightly waved her hand.

“Let me continue it with you, Miss Wycherly, for I am able to speak from experience. Who is counsel for that state? I am decidedly upon the other side.”

“We were only observing how much power the woman possessed over the man's mind, by gentleness, patience, and soft words, under trials, my dear Lady Kerrison.”

“Gentleness! patience!” remarked Clara, with a laugh of disdain, — “ask my brute any thing patiently!”

Anna Maria caught her hand, as she extended it scornfully towards Sir Foster.

“Now, dear Clara, don't be energetic. I will ask Tom what he thinks. Tom always says things so agreeably.”

“I will say what is true, if it proves disagreeable,” replied Clara, withdrawing her hand from Anna Maria's light grasp, and again pointing attention, by a graceful movement, to Sir Foster, who sat silently winking his eye. “If there is a creature born to be a blessing to woman—patient, gentle, and interesting—look at *that* man.”

Sir Foster winked violently. Anna Maria bent towards Lady Kerrison.

“Hush, my dear sister; do not offend Sir Foster, I beseech you; pray do not attract people’s notice. My dear Clara, forbear!”

“Nay, he is attractive enough in himself,” observed Lady Kerrison, in raised tones; “no words of mine can exalt him higher among the brute creation, than he stands by nature.”

Mrs. Tom Pynsent became alarmed at her sister’s audacity, and she signed to her husband, who was seated by Mrs. Tyndal, to join the little circle. He advanced immediately.

“Well, my little wife, what are you wishing? The dear Count is not here, is he? therefore you want *me* among you.”

“Now, be quiet, Tom.” Mrs. Tom Pynsent looked round to discover a disengaged chair: her husband saw the inquiring look, and he seated himself upon the carpet.

“Well, now, what was I summoned for?”

“My dear Tom,” replied his lady, smiling, “I particularly wish you to give me your opinion upon matrimony before the young ladies here assembled.”

“*My* matrimony, if you please,” observed Lady Kerrison—“you are requested to take a

comprehensive view of *my* matrimony." She looked haughtily towards Sir Foster, who sat within hearing. "There sits my animal: shall we decide upon the species?"

"Hush, Clara, hush!" softly whispered Mrs. Tom Pynsent.

"My dear Lady Kerrison!" burst from the lips of Miss Wycherly.

"Every one has a name and a place," continued Lady Kerrison, heedless of all caution and counsel. "Pray, Tom Pynsent, assert your opinions as plainly as I do mine, and tell me what a mother deserves, who weds her young and unsuspecting child to a brute, without contemplating her fate in prospect? Pray, Tom Pynsent, what is the conclusion of that fate? Will it rest in dull misery, or will the indignant spirit burst its fetters?"

Tom Pynsent affected ignorance of Lady Kerrison's meaning: he saw Miss Wycherly and Lucy Kerrison cast looks of alarm at Sir Foster, who was winking very rapidly; he saw, also, tears springing to the eyes of his wife—something must be done: he rose hastily.

"Anna Maria, this is a very *English* party, to your little trumpery, new-set taste! Your French Count would have lectured you for sit-

ting so long in one spot. Come, Chyrstal, and Lucy, let us have a round game or a country-dance. Who will play us a country-dance? Pen, rattle the keys for us."

Miss Wycherly was eager to break up the conference, and she played country-dances with great spirit: five couple were therefore soon arranged, and Christobelle was led forth by Charles Spottiswoode. When they reached the termination of the set, Mr. Spottiswoode addressed his partner with an air of mystery, and inquired, in low tones, if she had lately heard of or from Bedinfield. Christobelle could give no satisfactory intelligence. A letter had certainly been received at Wetheral lately, but she had not been made acquainted with its contents. Mr. Spottiswoode's reply was very complimentary to Christobelle: she felt it exquisitely.

"Miss Wetheral, I address you as no common person; and I feel assured a young lady, who has been the companion of Sir John Wetheral, must be prudent beyond her years. Penelope has never received any reply to several letters addressed to Lady Ennismore, and I am anxious to understand the cause. Your sister is not ill, I hope?"

Christobelle was unable to answer even that

simple question ; she knew nothing, and had heard nothing with reference to the Ennismores.

“ It is very extraordinary !” was Mr. Spottiswoode’s quick reply, but nothing more was said, for they were again indefatigably engaged in dancing, till eleven o’clock, when Sir John Wetheral approached his daughter, and advised her to rest till the carriage was announced. As she seated herself, according to his wish, Christobelle heard Mrs. Pynsent speaking to Mrs. Tyndal with some vehemence.

“ Upon my word, there will be a dreadful blow-up soon : I went to see Sally Hancock into the pony-carriage, and who should be in the hall but those two people abusing each other. That matchmaking woman has a thousand sins to answer for : she will pay for all this, Jane Tyndal, in the next world !”

Christobelle felt assured the Kerrisons were the party in question. Her eyes sought them, but they were not in either of the drawing-rooms. She turned to Mrs. Pynsent in terror, and inquired for Clara.

“ Oh ! my dear, they have killed each other by this time, as far as intentions can go. They were fighting in the hall half an hour ago.”

Christobelle turned pale with distress, and

Mrs. Pynsent, whose heart was as kind as her manners and address were abrupt, pitied her sufferings. She put her hand gently upon Christobelle's shoulder, and spoke with emphasis.

“ *You* can't help it, my poor girl; *you* need not vex yourself: it will all come home to the right person, but that won't be you. Only take care you are not the next sacrifice, and sell yourself for money at people's bidding.”

“ Oh! Mrs. Pynsent,” cried Christobelle, “ where is papa?”

“ Here, come with me, young lady, and I'll take you to your father. Remember every word in your heart of hearts which *he* utters.” Mrs. Pynsent put Christobelle's arm within her own, and continued, as they quitted the room, “ Some of her young ones have turned out well, in spite of her. I hope that will tell for her hereafter. Don't fret, now, and make your poor father wish himself at Old Nick: he'll want comfort at Wetheral, and you must comfort him. Here, Sir John, I've brought your good girl to you: don't let her marry in a hurry — ware sheep! There, take her into your care, and hide her for the next seven years.”

Sir John Wetheral received his daughter with smiling pleasure, and they proceeded to make their adieus to the remaining company. The

Tom Pynsents were engaged to spend the following day at Wetheral, and Mrs. Pynsent invited herself to accompany them. She had no intention of leaving Tom, just as he was returned from outlandish places. It might disturb the family party at Wetheral, but she liked to watch him enjoying the good roast beef of Old England and home-brewed ale again, and she would follow him to Old Nick, to see him looking so jolly and happy. "Bobby might have Sally Hancock to keep him company; he did not object to her when he was alone."

Sir John Wetheral particularly requested the pleasure of Mr. Pynsent's company to complete the family circle.

"Oh! well, I'll tell him what you say," replied Mrs. Pynsent. "Bobby has been snoring these two hours: he can't bear late hours at all. We shall do very well without him to-morrow, for he only sits licking his lips. Bobby never shone much—but I'll give your message. Sally Hancock will take very good care of him: it's a treat to her, you know."

The Wetherals' farewells were rather lengthy, for they had many friends to hold converse with. Miss Wycherly hovered round them for some time, as if she had some disclosure to make

which required effort. She suddenly caught Sir John's hand as he was quitting the room, and spoke quickly, "Have you heard from Bedinfield lately?"

"Not very lately; why do you appear so anxious, my dear Miss Wycherly?"

"I am very uncomfortable about Julia," she replied: "I have written three letters without receiving any reply. I am sure the Dowager is there; and I am equally sure she separates Julia from her friends. Julia always loved her friends, and there is something wrong when a woman is compelled to drop her old companions. It is not Julia's fault; I'll stake my existence upon Julia's true heart: there is double dealing somewhere, Sir John."

Sir John expressed his intention of visiting Bedinfield the following week, and Christobelle was to accompany him. He would be the bearer of a letter from Miss Wycherly with pleasure. Miss Wycherly's mind was greatly relieved.

"Oh! if you go, Sir John, all will be well. I shall hear the truth from you, and you will find how unchanged dear Julia is. Tell her, from me, that my love and gratitude is unchangeable, and that my home is her home for ever and ever. Tell her I care not for her silence, because it is

not *her* doing; and though we may never more meet, she will be Julia Wetheral, as freshly and fondly my friend, as when she married a man who could not deserve her. Tell her this from me, Sir John."

Miss Wycherly passed on with her lover, and the Wetherals entered their carriage in silence. Sir John sighed heavily, and did not enter into any conversation with his daughter during their drive home: doubtless there was bitterness in his thoughts. Christobelle lost all painful recollections of the emotion caused by Mrs. Pynsent's conversation, in pleasing remembrance of the pleasures of the day. She had enjoyed herself with the pure, unalloyed happiness which attends youth, ere it is pursued by care, and before it endures disappointment. She considered that day as the very happiest portion of her life. She had been kindly and hospitably welcomed by every one, and not a word of reproach or disgust had been levelled at her. Every one seemed delighted to see her eat and dance, to her heart's content. Nothing could surpass the pleasure of that day—nothing had ever equalled it!

Sir John parted with his daughter in the hall. He kissed her, as usual, but his voice was melancholy, and the parting short.

“ Good night, my love—I am going to my study.”

“ Good night, dear papa !”

Sir John turned away, and Christobelle listened to his step, as it echoed through the hall, till he closed the chapel-door behind him. She then retired to her own room, and slept soundly, in spite of anticipations of lectures from her mother upon supposed improprieties committed at Hatton.

CHAPTER XVII.

Lady Wetheral was extremely disconcerted by the knowledge of Mrs. Pynsent's intended visit for the day. The hour of breakfast passed slowly and miserably to Christobelle, who bore the whole burden of her petulance, and gave offence by the silence with which she hoped to dispel her irritability. "She was not at all like her other girls. Clara was warm in her temper, but she had always something sharp or witty to say. Christobelle was the dullest creature she had ever been doomed to sit in company with. Thompson was a great loss, poor dear silly woman; the best creature in the world, and the greatest fool for marrying a man who could not settle something upon her. If Christobelle would have the kindness to inform her how Clara looked, she would be extremely obliged by the information. Perhaps that was

a subject on which she might condescend to speak.”

Christobelle told her mother all she had seen and heard; and how fearful she was, that another dispute had arisen between the Kerrisons, which would increase Clara's violence. Lady Wetheral smiled incredulously.

“Clara will soon find herself no match for Sir Foster, and then she must yield by degrees. One or other must domineer, and the battle will be short: Clara will feel compelled to command her temper in time, and all this nonsense will be forgotten. People always forget the faults of the rich. Clara must give a splendid ball when it is blown over. How did Anna Maria appear to like being a guest at Hatton?”

“She was so happy and agreeable.”

“She is very unlike her mother, then. I never would visit Wetheral till your father's tiresome old mother died, and Christobelle followed her example. I expect to hear your sister designated ‘Mrs. Tom’ every where. Country places are so second-rate in their customs! I hope no one will be guilty of such bad taste before *me*.”

Christobelle had nothing to bring forward upon any subject which she considered likely to

amuse ; and, was, therefore, again silent. Her mother patted the table a few seconds.

“ Was Mrs. Hancock at dinner yesterday ? ”

“ Yes, mamma. ”

“ And how did she behave ? ”

“ She was quite silent. ”

“ Mrs. Pynsent is tolerated, because her position in life raises her among the highest of the land ; but Mrs. Hancock is unfit for ladies’ society :—I was going to say, for female association ; but she does not often intrude. Miss Wycherly is a softened likeness of Mrs. Pynsent. There is great insolence in such marked bluntness of manners ; one only meets with it in retired country places. ”

Another long pause.

“ Your father talks of visiting Bedinfield next week, and he means to intrude you there. I shall send for poor dear Isabel and her child, I think. ”

Christobelle was all astonishment. What ! summon the Brierly party, whom she always deprecated ! Her surprise was visible in her countenance.

“ Any thing very extraordinary, Bell, in wishing to see my daughter ? I wish you would endeavour to suppress impertinence in your

looks and motions, before you leave home. What are you sitting there for? Pray retire to your occupations.”

Christobelle went into her father's study — that sanctum sanctorum for painful feelings, and mortified spirits, and there she remained till the Hatton carriage arrived. She had a long and serious conversation with her kind parent upon many subjects. He spoke most feelingly upon the distress of mind he endured, respecting Clara's conduct and destiny. He had suspected at Hatton that the Kerrisons were not upon speaking terms; and, though Sir Foster was not the man to whom he would commit the care of a daughter, yet he feared that Clara's turbulent disposition increased her own misery, and defied her husband's control. He besought his youthful daughter to pray without ceasing for a mild and teachable spirit, that her future days might not be steeped in misery. He pointed out the worldly and avaricious feelings which had induced Clara to marry; and which he feared would wreck the peace of Lady Ennismore.

Lord Ennismore and Sir Foster Kerrison were selfish men—men who cared for their *own* pleasures, not for the happiness of those who

lived with them. What had Clara reaped from her connexion with the Kerrison family?—Contention and disgust. What had Julia gained by an early removal from her family? He firmly believed she was a victim to the strongly imperious and fascinating Lady Ennismore, who was jealous of any influence over her son's mind, and who would not endure a rival in her power.

Christobelle listened to her father's anxieties in sorrowful silence; young as she was, she had been too long his companion not to have gained some powerful views of the great truths he had ever been anxious to inculcate. She had also been too long his companion not to comprehend and feel for his disquietude. She threw her arms round his neck, and promised to be guided by his counsel in every action of her life; but she besought him not to take blame to himself for Clara's wilful conduct, or Julia's determination to become Lady Ennismore. Her father smiled, but did not combat her prayer. Christobelle was too young to be made the confidante of his feelings — much too young to distinguish the cause of his self-reproach. He could not tell *her* of one whom he deprecated as the cause of Clara's misery; that he was mourning, when too late, the power he had delegated

into unsafe hands. He would not tell her his indulgence to his wife had been treacherously and even wickedly dealt with; that he had given his affections to a worldly being, and that its consequences were now gnawing at his heart.

True, he could turn with pleasure to Anna Maria and Isabel, and behold *them* happy. They had married men of principle — men whom he approved and valued; but who would wipe away the tears from Clara's eyes?—from Julia's once smiling cheeks? Not the Protector, who swore to cherish each young and inexperienced creature at the altar. Not the world, which condemns and punishes its erring and unhappy members, with ruthless pertinacity. They must turn to another and more merciful Judge for pardon and peace; and had they been taught to pray for help in time of need? A father could not unfold all this to the youthful mind of his child; though his melancholy tone and countenance struck her attention, as he spoke to her of earthly and heavenly things. She could not *then* understand the chastening of his mind, but she listened in deep attention to his precepts; and fancied that nothing in this world could have power to attract her from him who loved and cherished her so dearly. To marry,

and quit the study, its quiet, its books, its happy associations! Oh! Lucy Kerrison might wish to leave Ripley, and the family quarrels which broke its rest; but Christobelle felt she could never like a human being, as she honoured and loved her father.

The Pynsents arrived in the highest spirits at Wetheral, and the sight of Anna Maria gave animation to her mother's countenance for a season. She thought her very much improved in looks, and it was not her fault that Anna Maria had not rouged before she married; but Sir John had many prejudices, and that was one of them. Tom Pynsent was delighted.

“Well, I do like to hear every one say my little wife is rouged; it proves how rosy she is grown. All my care, Lady Wetheral, all my care. I let her do as she liked; Biddulph, and Jack Smith, and myself, went after her, and the Count; every where kept her in sight, you know. She talked herself into that pretty rosy face.”

“You were not conspicuous, my love, I hope,” said her mother, smiling.

“Oh, no; Tom liked me to chat my French, did you not, my love?”

“I liked you to make yourself happy,” an-

swered Tom, affectionately. "You made *me* happy, by getting such a nice healthy bloom."

A look of affection, and a pressure of the hand, attested his lady's gratitude and love, though she coloured through her rouge at her husband's remark.

"When we have lunched," continued Tom Pynsent, taking nearly half a pigeon-pie into his plate, "when we have just taken off the edge of hunger, we'll have a ride on horseback, Anny, and go over the old ground again. You must have an old habit here, somewhere; let us go and see our old love haunts."

Anna Maria was nothing loth; her matrimony was of only four or five months' standing, and they were lovers still. She was quite willing to take an agreeable ride with her dear Tom.

"Let us have the young one, too," exclaimed the good-natured Tom Pynsent; "habits and horses for two, and you shall see the world, missy."

"I shall want Bell," said Lady Wetheral, annoyed at the idea of a *tête-à-tête* with Mrs. Pynsent.

"Ay, Miss Bell, stay with us, I shall want a casting vote, and I shall want you to introduce me to Sir John's study," cried Mrs. Pynsent,

giving Christobelle a thump upon her shoulder. "I must become acquainted with you, young lady."

Lady Wetheral's possession of manner concealed the disgust she endured at this movement. She turned to her eldest daughter, and inquired at what hour she would wish her horse equipped.

"Oh, my poor Lady Mary, let her be saddled at three, if you please. I think three o'clock, Tom, will do."

"Lord, Mrs. Tom, you will be as hot as fire, riding in the blazing sun," exclaimed Mrs. Pynsent.

"Perhaps Mrs. *Tom Pynsent* would prefer her ride at four o'clock," observed Lady Wetheral.

"My daughter, Tom, will melt away," replied Mrs. Pynsent, giving her a touch with the elbow. "Suppose your pretty face melts, eh, Mrs. Tom? That would be a pretty confession, wouldn't it?"

"At what hour, Mrs. Pynsent?" demanded her mother, addressing Anna Maria, and taking no notice of Mrs. Pynsent, the elder.

"Say four, then, at once," continued Mrs. Pynsent, "and don't confound mother and

daughter ; I am Pen Pynsent, and that is my daughter, Tom — Mrs. Tom, till I am underground, and out of the way.”

Lady Wetheral bowed with much suavity and politeness to her unrefined companion. “She had great pleasure in acknowledging her daughter Mrs. Tom Pynsent, the wife of an excellent and honourable man, standing high in the county.”

“To be sure — and very happy to get him. Every girl can’t marry such a tight lad as Tom ; as good a son as ever comforted a mother’s eyes. He’s none of your pimminy fellows, like I know who ; or a ranting, violent husband, like Foster Kerrison. He’s good, downright Tom ; and Mrs. Tom may look the best of them in the face.”

Tom Pynsent winked at his lady, and continued paying his *devoirs* to the pigeon-pie. Lady Wetheral could never argue with Mrs. Pynsent, and a short silence ensued. Mrs. Pynsent’s forcible mode of expressing her ideas, and her perfectly opposite views upon every subject, prevented all hope of coalition with Lady Wetheral, who could not endure abruptness, or what the world denominated “a good, downright person.” Her education in high life did not enable her to shape her sentiments and actions to the tone of country society, so far removed from the atmosphere of courtly phrases ;

and of all her acquaintance, Mrs. Pynsent was the least suited to her tastes. She disliked "truth-telling," disagreeable people; she deprecated people who "spoke their mind" upon every point, and at all times; in short, Mrs. Pynsent was never to be endured but as the mother of Tom; and now he was secured, nothing could be more intolerable than her presence.

Mrs. Pynsent took up her workbag after luncheon, and sat down to knit. Lady Wetheral politely stationed herself near her guest, and appeared occupied with her worstedwork. Anna Maria looked over Christobelle as she was busied copying a drawing for her father; and Tom Pynsent was gone to sit an hour with him in the study, and talk of Paris, till the riding-horses should make their appearance. Mrs. Tom Pynsent complimented her sister upon her first essays in landscape-painting, and prognosticated she would be the only accomplished Miss Wetheral of the family. Her mother smiled upon her.

"I may certainly confess you are the 'beautiful,' my dear Anna Maria. I quite congratulate you upon the addition of a little rouge."

"I'm sure I would never congratulate a daughter upon her painted face," exclaimed Mrs. Pynsent; "a woman with her cheeks raddled, is like the poor things in the street."

Anna Maria blushed, but in perfect good humour with her mother-in-law. She answered the remark with a confession of its propriety, and expressed her wish it should not be made known to her husband that she *did* employ art in improving her complexion.

“I was very foolish to rouge at all, because Tom did not like the idea of it; but the Count de Nolis pressed it so much as a material improvement to a lady who was naturally pale, that I tried a very little gradually; and poor dear Tom had such pleasure in fancying I was becoming blooming, that I never could bear to disappoint him. I assure you it was only to please Tom.”

Mrs. Pynsent was appeased at once by this candid confession: any thing which bore a meaning, or shew of affection towards her son, won her instant assent. She was satisfied the motive was good, and she upheld her daughter-in-law from that hour in deceiving her husband. But there was a reservation in her approval.

“It’s a nasty trick, Mrs. Tom, and a bad trick; but if you love your husband, and wish to please his eye—God help me!—I have nothing to say. Whoever loves Tom, has my heart and good-will. But leave it off as soon as you can.”

“It is very becoming,” observed Lady Wetheral, “and it is done in all the highly fashionable circles.”

“Yes, it’s *done*, my Lady Wetheral, and so are many abominable practices. Your high ladies do gamble, and they do intrigue, my Lady Wetheral; but you would not approve your daughter’s fashionable turn, I hope, in that line.”

Her ladyship disliked “home thrusts” also, in her catalogue of country annoyances. She made no reply to Mrs. Pynsent’s remark, but coolly inquired of Anna Maria when Miss Wycherly’s marriage was likely to take place.

“Oh! I am most likely to know my niece’s affairs,” resumed Mrs. Pynsent; “my daughter, Tom, can’t explain Pen’s intentions. Bill Wycherly gives up Lidham to the young couple.”

“A very excellent resolution,” observed Lady Wetheral, with emphasis.

“I don’t think so, at all. Bill should keep the staff in his own hand: I’m very angry with him. Let the young wait for the old, is my maxim.”

“The old, perhaps, are more fitted for retirement,” drily remarked Lady Wetheral.

“They are fitter to be called fools who re-

nounce their birthright," retorted Mrs. Pynsent, "and so I told Bobby when he offered Hatton to Tom. My son knew better than to accept it. Tom never forgets his duty, and his wife may say her prayers for having caught him."

"I should feel inclined to soften that expression," observed Lady Wetheral, in her gentlest accents; "the idea of catching a young man is not a pleasing figure of speech."

Mrs. Pynsent gave a short, loud laugh. "Why, my Lady Wetheral, we won't stand upon words; I express my knowledge of facts in few round-about phrases. I say what I think, and I can't help the cap fitting too tight to be agreeable."

Anna Maria beheld the disgust of Lady Wetheral's mind expressed upon her lowering brow. A slight frown was the only public token of distaste which was ever allowed to transpire: her ladyship never rebutted, never argued. It was, she averred, an indisputable sign of ill-breeding, wretched taste, and bad temper. She frowned, and her daughter knew its purport. It was impossible to leave two such ill-assorted companions together; the undisguised sentiments of Mrs. Pynsent, uttered with masculine energy of manner and voice, would overpower her conscious yet refined companion — perhaps cause a

nervous attack, and originate an illness. Mrs. Tom Pynsent relinquished all intention of riding with her husband. Her presence might check her mother-in-law's vivacity; it would certainly give pleasure to her mother, and it must be a satisfaction to Christobelle. Mrs. Pynsent's good nature even turned her daughter-in-law's expressed intention to Christobelle's advantage.

“Very good move, Mrs. Tom — very good move. You and myself are old women, as it were; we will sit here chatting to my Lady Wetheral, but let every one have their turn. Tom will ride with poor Miss Bell, and amuse her: the poor thing is cooped up to death here.”

“My daughter Bell has every advantage. I rather think my daughter considers her mother's society sufficiently agreeable,” said Lady Wetheral, bending politely but haughtily to her guest.

“Considers a fiddlestick, my Lady Wetheral!” replied Mrs. Pynsent, knotting with great energy. “What young girl considers herself agreeable with no playfellows, and a hipped Lady-mother? No, no; air, my lady—exercise, my lady—companions, my lady: *that* is poor Miss Bell's proper entertainment. Tom will ride with her, poor thing!”

Lady Wetheral did not condescend to reply to this sally. However lowly Christobelle stood in her eyes, however petulant she might be to the “stupid, awkward girl *herself*,” “poor thing!” sounded most offensively to her ear. Anna Maria again interfered by ringing the bell, and begging that Mr. Tom Pynsent might be summoned from the library. Tom’s presence, she knew, was always desirable every where; but his mother’s attention would be riveted upon her son, and Lady Wetheral would escape the inevitable contention which followed her own remarks. This was the first time the ladies had ever been placed a whole morning in juxtaposition. Anna Maria was sure the visit would never take place again. Each party would decline a second day of family intercourse.

Tom Pynsent’s entrance with Sir John effected a change in every one’s situation. Christobelle was to ride; Mrs. Pynsent decided upon that measure, and her father enforced it. He was then to do the honours of the conservatory and gardens to his guest, while the mother and daughter worked and conversed *tête-à-tête*. So far, all was prudently arranged, and promised peace.

Christobelle was enchanted with her ride. Tom Pynsent did not possess conversational

powers, but his want of talent was more than balanced by invincible good-nature, and manly courage of body and mind. Christobelle loved him for his kind heart and anxious wish to make every body happy ; and she loved him for the devotion he expressed for Anna Maria at all times, and in all places. It was not an uxurious affection, effeminate, and annoying to witness. Tom Pynsent loved with his whole heart the woman who possessed his name, and was to share his fortunes. He loved her with a manly tenderness, which displayed itself in a thousand forms, and raised him in public estimation by its amalgamation with his very existence. It connected his wife with the stable and the kennel ; it connected her with all his amusements. She was part and parcel of every thing in which he was concerned. What a man had Julia thrown from herself, ere he discovered Anna Maria's love and sufferings !

Tom Pynsent shewed Christobelle, with infinite satisfaction, the spots most consecrated to memory, as the scenes of Anna Maria's confessions. He seemed to linger with pleasure in the lane where his wife first disclosed her long-concealed misery, and where he had dismounted to impress a thousand kisses upon her hand.

His tone changed, as he recapitulated his astonishment and delight.

“By Jove, when I think of all this, I could never bear to ride here, if any thing happened to my little wife; but I hope not—I hope she will see me into my grave, and be comfortable with you all. She would do very well without me, but I couldn’t exist without her. I should let Kerrison have the kennel then, and take the shoes off the hunters. By Jove, they might turn out for life, then.”

Christobelle listened to her brother’s remarks with great interest; she could not understand the deep affection of his heart at that time, but she was sensible to the compliment of being the depository of his thoughts. She was delighted with his notice and attention; and particularly felt its pleasing influence, because her mother undervalued and reproached her daily and hourly at Wetheral. She was very sorry when their ride was brought to a close, and she again returned to her apartment to dress for dinner.

Anna Maria joined her sister; her hair was forced into immense curls, by her French attendant, Félicé, and her ringlets were frizzed into bows. Félicé followed her mistress in green

silk. Such a novelty was rare and alarming in Shropshire ; they had heard of the allied sovereigns being at that moment in London, but nothing approaching to a foreigner had yet appeared at Shrewsbury. Félicé was a creature to be stared at, and Anna Maria would become most formidably fashionable when once the knowledge of her arrival should transpire. Anna Maria said, “ she had brought her maid to friz Christobelle’s very English head of hair into something like effect. She bade her look in the glass, and smile at her hair, combed straight in front, and just turned up at the back. It was something that would horrify De Nolis in the autumn. She must positively have it dressed properly.”

“ See now, Félicé ; Miss Wetheral’s hair must be dressed this way.”

“ *Comme-ça, madame,*” repeated the smiling pretty Félicé.

“ Yes, *comme-ça* ; friz this dreadful crop into curls, *boucles*, Félicé—*grand boucles*, like mine. *Donnez mademoiselle un very nice tournure*, and let her be *très bien mise*. You may laugh, Bell, but I assure you a Parisian perfectly understands what you mean, if you only use the

words ‘*coiffure*,’ ‘*parure*,’ or ‘*tournure* ;’ they fill up the rest of the sentence intuitively.”

Christobelle submitted to the torture of the comb and curling-irons with great satisfaction. Whatever was fashionable in Paris, must be admired and envied in England, and her mother would be pleased to see her decorated by the hand of approved good-taste.

The hair was not the “*ultima thule*” of Félicé’s care. A “*bustle*” was appended to Christobelle’s waist, and the folds of her muslin frock were drawn over it with the nicest care ; her dress was dragged down to give a lengthened appearance to the waist, and the band tightened till she could hardly breathe. Mrs. Tom Pynsent and her “*artiste*” were charmed with the result of their exertions. Félicé spoke a long sentence, which Christobelle translated to her sister, whose knowledge of the language was not at all improved by four months’ residence in Paris. It was a well-turned compliment upon the change in the young lady’s appearance. Anna Maria regretted that their education had been so little attended to by Lady Wetheral.

“Papa has taught you so many accomplishments, Bell ! You draw, and you speak French, and quote delightfully, Charles Spottiswoode

says. You have had many advantages over us. The Count de Nolis said I was rapidly improving in French, and he advised me to return to Paris soon, to learn the accent; but I cannot speak it half so fluently as you do. I wonder what mamma will say to your head? I think it perfect."

Their appearance certainly made a sensation in the drawing-room, for Lady Wetheral raised her glass with a surprised and satisfied expression of countenance, and examined Christobelle very attentively. Mrs. Pynsent caught a glance of her head, curled, frizzed, and bowed in all directions; and she exclaimed, "Hollo, there! why, Miss Bell, what's the matter now? they have made a dancing-dog of you!"

"You have done a very kind action by your sister, my dear Mrs. Tom Pynsent," said Lady Wetheral, still gazing at Christobelle through her glass; "you have quite christianized her style and appearance."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Mrs. Pynsent, "poor Miss Bell! Well, now they *have* done it. Curly-headed christians for ever, Mrs. Tom! Who are you going to baptize next?"

"But does not Bell become her baptism?" asked Anna Maria, smiling.

“She is always a pretty girl; and, what is far better, she is a good and kind-hearted girl; but I don’t like your French fashions.”

“Pray, Bell, let your hair be attended to in future,” said Lady Wetheral, still holding her glass to her eye. “I approve of your present appearance. I cannot endure your thick, short hair hanging over your eyes.”

“By far the most natural, at her age,” observed Mrs. Pynsent; “a young girl dressed up that figure, is very unnatural and ridiculous.”

Lady Wetheral did not reply. Tom Pynsent was much amused at the transformation, when he entered the room. He bantered Christobelle, with great good-humour, upon the havoc she would cause among the hearts of the schoolboys, the very next vacation, if she persisted in twisting her hair into sausages; and he pitied poor Frank Kerrison, who would certainly renounce murdering cockchafers, to write verses upon her beauty. Sir John smiled, and stroked his daughter’s cheek, but he offered no comment upon her person. The circumstance was almost too trifling to amuse even the dull half hour before dinner. A whim of Mrs. Tom Pynsent had led her to dress her sister’s hair; and its end was answered, by causing a few smiles and a jest. The inci-

dent passed away, and was forgotten in the summons to dinner; but that very trifling occurrence laid the foundation of much future misery:—it woke up Lady Wetheral's slumbering energies, and led her to speculate upon the establishment of a creature whom she had, till that moment, renounced as awkward and vulgar—a girl belonging exclusively to her father—whose futurity was indifferent to herself. Causes, however trifling in their origin, swell into fearful effects, under the agency of the weak or wicked.

When the ladies returned into the drawing-room, Anna Maria and Christobelle enjoyed a short *tête-à-tête* during their mother's *siesta*. Anna Maria said it would be impossible to hope for pleasant intercourse between the houses of Pynsent and Wetheral. The two ladies had not agreed in one sentiment upon any subject during Christobelle's absence, and each appeared irritated and wearied. It was altogether abrupt truth on one side, and haughty silence on the part of her mother: she was very certain there would be no pleasant result from this day's occurrences. Her two relations had never before passed a day together, dependent upon each other's society; and it had only taught them how impossible it would be to meet again upon

those terms. She would tell Tom her thoughts as soon as they arrived at Hatton—Tom could manage every thing—she did not believe any body could resist Tom's pleasing way of arranging things : perhaps Tom would entreat his mother not to contradict Lady Wetheral so very flatly.

This was distressing intelligence : if Lady Wetheral felt disturbed by Mrs. Pynsent's peculiar style of manners, there would be an end at once to Christobelle's happy prospects ; she was becoming jealous of her daughter's society, though she professed indifference ; and she could see little of her sister's company, if Mrs. Pynsent was necessarily included in the invitation, which welcomed the Tom Pynsents, at all times, to the now dull halls of Wetheral Castle. Lady Wetheral's offended taste was a mental wound which never closed. She was not harsh towards vice—it might redeem itself ; but rudeness of manner, or a vulgar phraseology, was beyond the limits of pardon. In both particulars did Mrs. Pynsent certainly transgress ; and her ladyship's remarks, after their departure, betokened her disgust and aversion to the society of her departed guest.

“I shall feel obliged, Bell, by your silence

upon the events of this disgusting day. Let me forget, if possible, that I have been, for eight hours, the companion of stentorian coarseness and vulgarity. I must regret seeing your sister but seldom, as I apprehend I shall do. I cannot be upon terms with a woman who designates her son's lady 'Mrs. Tom : ' now ring, if you please, for my *sal volatile*."

The next day's post brought a letter from Mrs. Boscawen : its contents were most cheering. "She was very anxious Christobelle should know how beautiful her darling babe was growing, and that it had outgrown its first pinafores. Boscawen was quite as fond of the darling as she could possibly be herself, and Christobelle would be amused by seeing him nurse it to sleep, while she tamboured its little frock. Miss Tabitha was gone to stay a few weeks at Worcester, with Mrs. Ward, and there was no one now at Brierly to alarm her with heat, and cold, with drinking too little, or eating too much. She was perfectly happy with her dear Boscawen, nursing and laughing all day long—no books—no lectures. Oh, if Chrystal could but see her *now* !"

A postscript, in Mr. Boscawen's hand-writing, was equally valuable, and gave deep satisfaction to Sir John Wetheral. These were his words :—

“ I have lived many years in seclusion, and in the dull misery of a long bachelorship ; but I am repaid by a happiness, too fondly valued to describe. The remainder of my life will pass in making an innocent and exemplary wife and mother, as happy as mortality will allow, and poor human nature can enjoy.

“ Yours faithfully,

“ C. BOSCAWEN.”

It was grateful happiness to Sir John Wetheral, to reflect upon the destiny of Isabel. Boscawen's age was an unpromising opening to the fortunes of a young creature attached to juvenile pleasures, and averse to the restraints of tuition : but Sir John judged that the high principles of the man to whom he should commit the welfare of his child, would be the safeguard of her happiness. The atmosphere of Wetheral was unfavourable to mental culture. At Brierly, the society of her husband would enrich Isabel's mind with stores from his own deep resources ; and her heart would become refined and exalted by Boscawen's strict integrity of thought and action. He had judged rightly. Isabel loved Boscawen for his kindness of heart ; and the birth of her infant knit their feelings together, in one dear object of conti-

nually increasing solicitude, which would not dissolve again. Anna Maria was happy, also, with her honest and affectionate Tom Pynsent ; but what was to be the hope of Clara ? — clouds and darkness rested upon it.

Christobelle was now to prepare for her visit to Bedinfield. She wondered at the sudden intention, on her father's part, to go uninvited to Lord Ennismore ; but she was not a party to the events—if such there were—which gave rise to the meditated visit. Christobelle's youth precluded her from entering into the consultations, or bearing a part in the correspondence, of her father : she could only guess all was not right, when he spoke of Bedinfield, because his smile fled, and his expression became melancholy ; but she was an utter stranger to its cause. She was perfectly content to know she was preparing to visit Julia, and to travel with her father. Her mother spoke very seriously to her the evening before they quitted Wetheral.

“ Bell, you will have Taylor to attend you at Bedinfield. I admire Miss Willis's taste in your dresses : she is unrivalled in her selections, and your figure is considerably improved since Félicé has given you a few general instructions. The long waist is extremely becoming to you. Your

hair gives quite a changed expression to your whole person now, Bell."

"I am very glad, mamma, you approve of it."

"I do, very much: I have some hopes you will equal your sisters in appearance. If you persevere in attending to your hair, which is such a graceful ornament to a woman, I shall have some pride in your well-doing. I never looked at you before, Bell, you were such a dowdy-looking creature. Walk across the room—head up, Bell: really, that dress is very becoming."

Christobelle walked several times up and down the boudoir, to allow her mother to complete her observations. She was to throw her head gracefully back—she was to curtsy, as if in the act of receiving company—she was bid to come forward and offer a fan, with an air of easy composure. She performed many disagreeable, but extremely necessary, evolutions, to give her mother satisfaction; and, unfortunately, her dress, and her eagerness to bring the lesson to an end, assisted her success. She was decided a creature not destitute of a certain air, and, as Landscape Brown would word it, there was "great capability," with severe pruning, and much persevering determination, to shine. If Christobelle made good use of the three following years, her

mother did not despair of matching her even higher than Lady Ennismore. "A very Frenchy style of dress and walk would prove a great novelty, and attract gentlemen who always approved the novelties they failed to admire. She would cause a sensation, and some contention in opinion, which would inevitably make her the highest fashion in Shropshire."

This was an unlooked-for change in the politics of Wetheral. Little did Christobelle think Félicé's hand would have wrought such evil to an unsuspecting, unspeculative creature as herself. Little did she dream, under her tasteful assistance, to spring, at a bound, from the "awkward, dull Bell — Sir John's tiresome, learned daughter," into an object of speculation, which would again waken her mother's powers into action, to draw her from happy tranquillity, into scenes of distracting contention. She was glad to think the Bedinfield visit stood between her and a second lesson upon graceful movements. She could not dive into the future, or draw conclusions from the present, at this moment: she rejoiced only to escape lectures upon style, and reprimands for acting upon impulse. Christobelle hoped to find freedom and happy enjoyment at Bedinfield, and that pleasing thought

gave her spirits to endure her mother's unceasing efforts to arouse "a proper vanity" in her mind, and make her look forward to a ducal, or, at least, the coronet of a marquis.

"Bell, you shall certainly be emancipated from the seclusion of Wetheral, and receive the first advantages which a dancing-master can give. I will endeavour to persuade your poor father to give us a spring or two in London, or a trip to Paris. Paris I should approve most. Félicé has quite delighted me with her tasteful fancy."

"I prefer Wetheral, mamma, and my pleasant readings with papa in the library, if you please."

"Young ladies are not the soundest judges upon their own case," replied her mother, drily; "they may prefer indolence to activity: and, for a season, they may be blind to their own defects; but they will take care, in the end, to throw the consequences of their folly upon their parents, as Clara did. She forgot her own very insupportable violence of temper; and her endeavour to blame me as the cause of her high position, as Lady Kerrison, was improper. *I* find my daughters establishments, but I look to *them* to fill that situation with propriety."

"Sir Foster is very violent to all his people,

mamma," Christobelle observed, hoping to shield Clara from remark.

"Your sister knew that, Bell: every body knew Sir Foster was a dull brute. She should never have entered into collision with him. If he kicked his servants, he was not likely to strike his wife without provocation. Clara is extremely provoking."

It was true, indeed. Lady Kerrison did act most unadvisedly in rousing a turbulent nature, when it was actually at rest: but who pointed her attention to the match, and softened down every report which bruited Sir Foster's violence to the neighbourhood? Surely, Lucy Kerrison's remarks upon her father's temper was a beacon to parents, to avoid the domestic quicksands of Ripley—yet Christobelle was present, and heard her mother vindicate Sir Foster's treatment of the fishmonger, and urge the eligibility of the connection. Lady Wetheral continued:—

"I am not at all pleased with the junior Pynsents being guests in the country—Mrs. Pynsent will follow them every where, and quote 'Mrs. Tom' to her friends. I cannot say that match has been productive of pleasure to me. Lady Ennismore, the dowager, has been offensive in her conduct, by presuming to close her son's

house to his friends. Bedinfield is no pleasant refuge for *me*, I can see. I can never witness Clara's quarrels—and Brierly is so secluded, besides Isabel having the child always with her, that I have no satisfaction in *that* quarter. What comfort have I in my girls' marriages? You must make up to me for these sad disappointments, Bell. You shall marry Lord Selgrave, when you are both introduced into life."

"Lord Selgrave, mamma! I never saw him in my life."

"So much the better: the introduction rests with me. Lord Farnborough will not leave Shropshire, and Selgrave, the boy, will be amongst us. Farnborough Stacey will be the favourite residence, even when he becomes Duke of Forfar. You shall be Lady Selgrave, Bell, the future Duchess of Forfar: does not that title raise your little vanity, and produce ambitious wishes?"

"No, indeed, mamma, I would rather be comfortable in the library, reading to papa."

"If there is any thing I detest," exclaimed Lady Wetheral, with great asperity, "it is a slothful and mean mind, content to grovel in lowliness—untouched by ambition—crouching in dullness, and blind to prosperity. Leave my

presence, Bell. Go to your chamber, and let me see you no more."

Christobelle prepared to obey the harsh injunction. She lighted her taper, and turned to utter "good-night." Her mother waved her hand.

"Say nothing. I do not choose to be disturbed to-morrow by your appearance. I have no regard for blind obstinacy—pass on in silence, if you please."

Christobelle quitted the boudoir in tears. Why was her early life to be embittered with reproaches concerning those things which might never take place? and why was her mind to be tortured into projects which could not affect her heart, or her time of life? She rushed to her father's study, and threw herself into his arms, weeping. He was surprised at the movement, and still more so at her words:— "Oh, papa, don't let me be obliged to marry. Don't make me think of Lord Selgrave; for I never saw him, and I cannot marry him."

"My dear Chrystal," he exclaimed, in astonishment, "I cannot understand you."

Christobelle explained to him her mother's wishes, and her anger at her disclaiming matrimony with Lord Selgrave. He smiled.

“ This is sad folly, my dear child ; I ought not to allow myself to feel entertained at your alarm, for I see the pernicious effects of education extending to yourself : but do not weep, Chrystal. No one shall take you from me, without your consent.”

“ I may always live with you, papa, and stay at Wetheral ?” she asked, as the tears coursed down her cheeks.

“ You shall never quit me till you say, ‘ Papa, I wish to leave you for the home of another.’ ”

“ And that will never, never be, my own dear papa !” Christobelle embraced him with joyous gratitude, and smiled through her tears.

“ Then be happy, my child, and think no more of little Lord Selgrave. You, at least, shall not reproach me hereafter with weakness of character. Go and sleep sweetly, and prepare for tomorrow’s journey.”

Christobelle received her father’s blessing, and her heart was no longer sorrowful. He would watch over and protect her ! She would not be driven to marry Lord Selgrave, and renounce her peaceful station by his side. She could live with him, and read to him for ever ! She became calm, and her mother’s angry glances faded from her recollection. Christobelle retired to her slumbers in peace, that night.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Bedinfield appeared a kingly residence. The mansion stood before the traveller's gaze, with its towers and battlements, grand and imposing to the view. Had Lady Wetheral accompanied her husband, she would have decided that happiness must reign uncontrolled in that most stately dwelling. There was grandeur and repose in the scene, as they advanced to the massive pile of building; and there was stately ceremony enforced, when they arrived at its portals.

It was seven by the chapel clock, when Sir John Wetheral and his daughter entered the hall of Bedinfield, and a train of footmen in gorgeous livery bandied their names, till they were ushered into a vast apartment, richly carved in oak. It was untenanted: there was a vase of rare exotics upon a small silver table, which some hand

had apparently quitted in haste, for some of the flowers had fallen upon the Persian carpet, and their stalks were wet and freshly gathered. Christobelle's young ideas had considered Wetheral Castle the criterion of elegance, and her eager curiosity examined with surprise the magnificent decoration around. The superb silver tables—the costly cabinets—the whole style of grand simplicity delighted her taste, and astonished her mind. She turned to her father with feelings of ecstasy.

“Can there be any thing more grand than this, papa? Can any place be more superbly beautiful? Oh, look at that lovely cabinet—that row of cabinets—and those paintings! How happy Julia must be!”

“Does all this create happiness, Chrystal?”

“Oh no, that was a wrong word—but how *pleased* Julia must be, looking at these things, and thinking they are her own! But why does not Julia come to us, papa? Did not she expect us to-day?”

Sir John paused, as he was accompanying Christobelle in her passage up the apartment, and he addressed her with seriousness.

“Chrystal, make no observations of any kind, and ask no questions of me, or of Julia. I ex-

pect great prudence from you. You are now my companion and friend, and you must learn to veil much surprise, by silence. Be very prudent, my child, and remark nothing to your sister."

"I will be very prudent, papa," answered Christobelle, in a whisper. The vastness of the room, and the mystery expressed in her father's words, struck her with awe. She already felt as though silence must reign with so much grandeur, and that liberty of speech dwelt not in lofty apartments. She continued silently examining a portrait of extreme beauty, which she was aware represented the Dowager Lady Ennismore, in her youth. It still retained a considerable degree of likeness—the eye could never change—its extraordinary expression was there—and the haughty look, subdued by the collision of high society, was admirably expressed in the painting. Christobelle was irresistibly attracted by the portrait, and she gazed upon it till a door opened near her, and roused her attention. A female attendant approached. She was a tall, stately person, attired with peculiar neatness and precision. She brought Lady Ennismore's compliments of welcome. Her ladyship invited her guests to retire to their apart-

ments. She would have the pleasure of meeting them in the drawing-room when the great bell pealed, and after her guests had refreshed themselves by changing their attire.

Sir John Wetheral advanced, slightly bowing to the stately messenger.

“ I believe I address an attendant of Lady Ennismore ? ”

“ I have the honour to attend the Dowager Countess of Ennismore, ” was the reply.

“ Your message is from Lady Ennismore, my daughter, is it not ? ” observed Sir John, anxiously.

“ My message is from the Dowager Countess, ” replied her attendant.

“ Lady Ennismore is probably from home ? ”

“ The young Lady Ennismore is in her dressing-room, ” was the answer. “ I am deputed to attend Miss Wetheral to her apartment. ”

This was extraordinary. Was not Bedinfield the property of Julia and her lord ? Yet the message of compliment was tendered by the Countess Dowager, as if she still presided over the mind and estate of her son. There was something gravely suspicious in this coldly polite reception, which disturbed the father’s heart. Christobelle begged to know if her room was situated

near her father's bedchamber, and she turned to him with a look of earnest alarm. He smiled.

“Miss Wetheral feels a little nervous among strangers; may I inquire if the rooms destined for us are near each other?”

“They are near,” was the laconic reply, and Christobelle prepared to depart. A servant entering at the moment, to offer his services to Sir John, they proceeded together to the great gallery, into which their apartments opened. The stately female pointed to a heavily-carved oak-door, as she preceded Christobelle. “Sir John Wetheral sleeps in the crimson chamber.” She then threw open the door of a large gloomy room appropriated to Christobelle. “Yours, Miss Wetheral, is the tapestried chamber.” She then curtseyed and withdrew.

Taylor was in a dressing-room adjoining, laying out her young lady's wardrobe, and Christobelle surveyed the horrors of the tapestried chamber, which she was sure would in itself disturb her slumbers. The “Murder of the Innocents” stood in enormous proportions at the bottom of the room facing her bed, which was decorated with sable plumes round its summit. The brawny arms of the soldiery seizing the young children, their dreadful eyes, and the

weapons they brandished over the heads of the hapless babes, took effect upon her imagination, and terrified her. Christobelle was quite sure the glare of the high wax-lights, when she retired for the night, would raise them into living bodies, that would “live, and move, and have their being,” to her extremity of terror. The deep recesses, the dark oak furniture—all and each combined to render the room terrible. She would have given worlds to be at that moment even in the boudoir at Wetheral.

Sir John tapped at his daughter’s door, as he prepared to descend to the drawing-room : Christobelle was dressed, and ready to accompany him. She begged him to see her safely to her room-door every night, and confessed her alarm at the idea of passing so many hours in a place so full of horrors. If he could only see the horrid objects which glared round the walls of her room, he would not wonder at her disquietude !

Sir John endeavoured to reason Christobelle into calmness, and he inquired why her rest should be disturbed by pictorial representations of Scripture history. Was not the hand of her Maker as mercifully stretched forth to uphold her among gobelin tapestry, as in the paper

hangings of Wetheral? Christobelle acknowledged it was so. She was silenced; she did not offer any defence for her alarms, but she could not suppress them. That chamber would never be her "sleeping" apartment. She should never be able to close her eyes.

A servant was in waiting to announce them, as they descended into the hall. The folding-doors were thrown open, their names were called over with proper emphasis, and they found themselves in the presence of Lord and Lady Ennismore, and the Countess-dowager. The latter rose, and advanced with her usual suavity. She took both Sir John's hands in hers.

"My dear Sir John, this is a real and unexpected honour. I am delighted to see you. Miss Wetheral, you are welcome: Julia is anxious, I see, to appropriate you—fly to her, my love. We are a small family-party, you see, Sir John Wetheral; but we shall endeavour to amuse you at Bedinfield. Lady Wetheral is well, I hope."

Sir John replied in courteous terms, that his lady was in health.

"I hope you will find our dear Julia well, and as handsome as ever. Our Staffordshire air is excellent, and Julia's bloom is, I think, in-

creased. Julia, I must not monopolise your father. It would not be just, so I resign him with reluctance."

The Dowager led Sir John towards the young Lady Ennismore, who received him with almost wild fondness. Lord Ennismore also came forward.

"I have much pleasure in bidding you welcome, Sir John Wetheral, as also yourself, Miss Wetheral. I hope I see you both in good health."

Lord Ennismore bowed low, and resumed his seat. The Dowager Lady Ennismore spoke for her son.

"My dear Ennismore feels with me the honour and pleasure of this unexpected visit. I have much to show Sir John, now that he has favoured us with his company. I shall do the honours of the Park to him, with great pleasure, and request his opinion upon our new lodge."

"You will doubtless, my dear mother, show our guest, Sir John, the new line of road through the plantations."

"My dear Ennismore, our very first drive will be through the plantations. I am proud to exhibit your taste; it will always hold its place in my mind, as our lion of Bedinfield."

“It was not my suggestion, my dear mother,” replied the poor, dull-looking Lord Ennismore.

“My dear son, you approved of my idea, which makes it your own affair. The new drive is certainly an affair of your own carrying out. I had little to do with it. The architect, you know, is secondary. The filling up requires knowledge and taste: that was your part, dear Augustus.”

A smile of satisfaction stole over the pallid face of Lord Ennismore, but it could not light up the leaden expression of his eyes, as they rested upon his mother's face.

“I am glad you think highly of that road, my dear mother.”

“I think it the finest work upon the estate, my dear son. I was trying to inoculate Julia with my enthusiastic delight, yesterday.”

“Julia does not admire it as you do,” observed Lord Ennismore, rising from the chair near his lady, and taking a seat by his mother.

“We are not all granted the same tastes,” replied her ladyship. “Bedinfield has been my home many years, and you, my dear Augustus, were born here. It must be a cherished place to my heart.”

“I hope it will be always your home.”

Lord Ennismore took his mother's hand, and held it in his, till dinner was announced.

Julia did not hear the conversation which took place between Lord Ennismore and her mother-in-law, neither did she observe her lord's change of situation: she was learning the news of Wetheral from her father's lips, and her whole attention was fixed upon him, and the communications which deeply touched her heart. Christobelle heard her complain of the silence of all her friends: she dwelt with energy upon the silence of Miss Wycherly, and mourned to think how slightly her friendship had stood the trial of a few months' absence. She had invited Penelope to visit Bedinfield, but even politeness had not elicited an answer from Lidham. She felt very keenly the conduct of her early friends, but Lady Ennismore had warned her seriously that such would be the case, and her kindness was Julia's greatest consolation.

"Have you not *once* heard from Penelope?" asked her father, speaking low.

"I have never received a letter from Shropshire since I married, papa." Julia's eyes filled with tears at the thought of estranged affections.

"Penelope charged me with many messages,

Julia. She desired me to say that, absent or silent, her heart was unchanged, and Lidham was your home, equally with Bedinfield and Wetheral."

"Dear Penelope!" exclaimed Julia, with clasped hands, "I was loth to think she loved me less; but her happy lot should not make her silent to her old friend!"

Julia's movement attracted the attention of the Dowager. She addressed herself again to Sir John.

"My dear Sir John, what do you think of Staffordshire scenery? We do not relinquish the palm of beauty to any county in the southern part of Great Britain. Tell me exactly your route."

Sir John gave a concise statement of their little journey, which was commented upon by her ladyship with vivacity. She entered into descriptions of Staffordshire scenery, and the Staffordshire aristocracy, with increasing energy, keeping all attention engaged towards herself, and allowing no respite for recommencing a conversation with Julia. Lady Ennismore chatted even through the immense hall, and to the very dinner-table. Christobelle also watched the elder Lady Ennismore with uncontrollable sur-

prise take her seat at the head of the table, while Julia quietly placed herself at her father's side. Christobelle looked at her father, to observe his movements; she did not meet his eye; his expression of countenance and manner was very grave, but he gave no evidence of having noticed the circumstance: he was conversing with Julia upon the arrival of the Tom Pynsents.

The dinner passed in solemn grandeur. The party was too limited for general conversation, and the presence of many servants checked all approach to remarks beyond commonplace allusion to the weather and climate of Staffordshire. Christobelle admired the simplicity of the apartment, in its magnificent proportions and grand style of architecture, but she was glad when the meal concluded, and the servants were withdrawn.

The Dowager Lady Ennismore was then seen to great advantage: Christobelle could not help admiring the perfection of manners which rendered her so fascinating to every one with whom she came in contact. In spite of Julia's position, so decidedly a position of disadvantage to herself, and improper, as the wife of Lord Ennismore—in the very face of that impropriety, in spite of dislike to Lady Ennismore, as the

cause of Julia's present situation, Christobelle beheld her with a powerful admiration. She was attracted by that refined attention, that power of pleasing, so delicate, so full of tact, accompanied by great personal beauty, which takes the senses captive, even while we struggle against its power. She admired the witchery of her eyes, as she glanced upon each person those captivating and flattering meanings, which few minds could resist : and she was, beyond expression, charmed by the attentions which were offered to her youthful age, which fell like oil upon the waters. The Dowager was long past her *première jeunesse* ; yet the vivacity of her conversation, and the propriety of her style of dress, threw over her whole person an air of indescribable attraction. Sir John appeared to watch her ladyship with deep attention ; no wonder, then, that Christobelle's unsuspecting age drank largely of her fascination, that she could never imagine the deep wickedness of her nature, or believe such winning manners concealed an imperious and dangerous spirit. Her whole attention was fixed exclusively upon the Dowager Lady Ennismore.

All moved together into the drawing-room. The Countess laughingly apologised for the

abstemious habits of Bedinfield, and expressed her gratification that her dear son never loved the pleasures of the table—pleasures altogether so gross, so unintellectual, that she wondered gentlemen could lend themselves to an enervating and disgusting consumer of existence.

“ We are very sober people, Sir John, and our little family-trio never separate after dinner: I consider you in that affectionate light also, therefore we will not lose each other’s society during your stay. I must have you form a little ring round me, that I may enjoy the conversation of each. My dear Miss Wetheral, you must remain near me; I do not forget my young friend. My dearest Julia, you will take your little *siesta* as usual.”

Julia declined a *siesta*; she expressed her indisposition to sleep; she wished to listen to her father, and ask for Shropshire news. She could not sleep while her father and sister remained at Bedinfield.

“ My dearest Julia, I shall be seriously uneasy. My dear son, let us prevail upon Julia not to forego her *siesta*, so very strongly recommended by Dr. Anstruther, so very necessary to her health at this time !”

“ My dear mother, you are always right; I

agree with you, and think Lady Ennismore should not omit her *siesta*," observed his lordship, looking particularly dull.

"I do not feel its necessity now at all, dear mother," observed Julia, affectionately pressing Lady Ennismore's hand, and looking beseechingly in her face. "My dear father and Chrystal take away all inclination to sleep."

"I will not lose my daughter for all the world can offer," exclaimed the Dowager, throwing her arms round Julia. "My dear Julia, will you not oblige me?"

"But, dearest Lady Ennismore, this *one* evening, just to talk of Wetheral!"

"My love, I trust your father is intending to honour us some days. Ennismore and myself are uneasy. You will not give us disquietude, Julia? Sir John will not advocate an abrupt change of system, I feel assured. Oblige us, my dearest Julia."

Julia arose to give pleasure; when did she ever resist solicitation! She gave her father an affectionate salute: "Dear papa, I shall not be long away from you. Lady Ennismore is so fearful of my health, that a *siesta* is considered indispensable. Perhaps Chrystal will lull me to

sleep by tales of Wetheral. Come with me, Chrystal."

The Countess caught Christobelle's hand as she rose to accompany Julia.

"My dear young friend, I fear I must appear a monster, but I am apprehensive; my Julia must repose, not converse with dear and near relations. It is too exciting for her. My dear Julia never gives disquietude — she is aware of my alarms. Oblige me and Ennismore, dear Julia."

Julia retired with unwilling steps. Lord Ennismore gave his arm to his lady, and escorted her to the door of her dressing-room; he then returned to his mother's side. She watched him for some moments with an anxious expression; and, while Sir John examined some exquisite paintings, Christobelle heard the following dialogue between Lady Ennismore and her son; it took place in a low tone of voice, as if it was not intended to reach other ears.

"My dear Augustus, have you taken your dinner pill?"

"Yes; and the powder half an hour previous to the pill."

"I hope and believe Julia reminded you of it; I am glad she was so thoughtful, dear girl."

“ No, my dear mother, it was your hint ; don't you remember saying this afternoon something about dinner pills ? It put me in mind of taking one.”

“ Was it my hint, my dear son ? Mothers are foolishly attentive creatures, Augustus ; they are always so apprehensive. I often fear I am wearisome !”

“ You never can be wearisome in attending to my pills, my dear mother. I should be very unwell without them.”

“ My darling Julia forgets, Augustus ; it is not, I am sure, intentional.”

“ But *you* never forget. Julia did not pour out my soda-water this morning. I was quite ill for half an hour.”

“ Young wives are thoughtless creatures, Augustus. A mother, you know, has an old, reflecting head upon her shoulders.”

“ I am very glad you did not leave us, my dear mother ; Julia would have poisoned me by this time.”

“ Oh, no, my dear son, not *quite* so bad as that ; some few mistakes, perhaps, but not so fearful a catastrophe. I could wish you to call upon the Delancy's to-morrow, Augustus ; the General

very much wished to ask your opinion upon some political point."

"Certainly I will call at Huish, if you wish it."

"Julia will ride with you: the world should see you always together. It is politic, at any rate. I will ——" Lady Ennismore's voice sunk into a whisper. Again Christobelle caught her words.

"It won't be a long affair. Make a round of calls, and that will fill up time, you know." Another long whisper. "My dear Sir John, you are pleased with that Spagnoletti; it is a picture of great merit. The late Lord Ennismore was a great collector."

Her ladyship spoke now of pictures: she gave the history of each painting, and detailed the research of her late lord, who travelled through Europe in order to form the splendid collection at Bedinfield. When Lady Ennismore ceased speaking, it was time for coffee, and Julia's reappearance was anxiously expected by her sister. With the same punctilious attention, Lord Ennismore again left the apartment, and returned with his lady under his arm. He placed her near the Countess, made his bow, and offered to sweeten her cup of coffee, with a cold formality

and an unexpressive smile. Julia looked pleased by the unmeaning attention.

“Have you slept, dearest Julia?” asked the Countess, as she sipped her coffee.

“No, indeed; I thought of Wetheral, and I could not close my eyes. I wish I had been allowed to remain here, dearest mother.”

“Naughty girl!” Her ladyship tapped Julia’s arm lightly. “How can you trifle with my anxiety? Sir John, how is our dear Julia looking?”

“She looks in excellent health. Julia always enjoyed good health,” said her father; “she was the blooming rose at Wetheral.”

“We watch over her with infinite anxiety,” returned the Countess. “What should we do, my dear lord, without Julia?”

Lord Ennismore cast a heavy glance upon Julia, and smiled. “Dr. Anstruther is considered clever; I trust no unfortunate accident will occur at Bedinfield. You, my dear mother, are extremely quick-sighted, and will avert much that is unpleasant.”

“You flatter me, my dear lord; but my fears create watchfulness, and often, I fear, give disturbance to my sweet Julia. Sir John, we are a whist party; may I challenge you to play? I

shall give my young friend the range of our library as her amusement. I remember Miss Wetheral's taste for reading. My poor memory does yet retain the remembrance of my friends' tastes. My dear lord will be so honoured in the task of introducing you to his library. Allow me to light a taper."

The Countess rose with graceful ease and lightness of step to effect her purpose. Lord Ennismore rose also, and bowed to Christobelle. He spoke *so* heavily, and with such dull precision.

"I shall have pleasure in doing the honours of the Bedinfield library to Miss Wetheral. I cannot flatter myself it surpasses the very handsome collection at Wetheral Castle, nevertheless, it claims distinction. Do me the honour, Miss Wetheral, to accept my arm."

Christobelle placed her arm within the awkwardly-extended elbow which Lord Ennismore held out for acceptance, and they proceeded to the library. His lordship stood in the centre of the room, and harangued with the tone and manner of a showman who describes by rote what his mind cannot understand.

"You see here, my agreeable Miss Wetheral, a collection of the best authors. To the right

you will perceive the most approved ancients ; to the left, the most approved moderns. Before us you will observe a splendidly-bound collection of the works of our novelists, such as Fielding, &c. ; and, behind us, there is an equally select collection of plays, from our great Shakespeare to almost the present hour."

" This is a magnificent library, Lord Ennismore, indeed."

" It is considered so, Miss Wetheral. Bedinfield has long held pre-eminence in Staffordshire ; perhaps I am not wrong in asserting its superiority to many mansions in the neighbouring counties."

" I will, my lord, if you please, borrow Shakespeare while you are at cards. I promise to replace the book."

" We have a librarian, who replaces the different works, and attends to the thing, Miss Wetheral ; do not give yourself the trouble. My mother arranges every thing with perfect order."

" Not Julia, then ?" she exclaimed in astonishment, and without reflection. " Does not my sister Julia arrange every thing at Bedinfield ?"

" No, Miss Wetheral ; the Countess-dowager has the management of my affairs. I should be extremely sorry to remove the control of every

thing into other hands. The Countess-dowager conducts the establishment at Bedinfield."

"I thought the Countess was on a visit! I really thought Julia and yourself lived at Bedinfield." Christobelle looked with extreme surprise at Lord Ennismore.

"The Countess-dowager remains with us," returned his lordship. "We were anxious to retain my dear mother at Bedinfield. She is kind enough to transact all affairs for me. I am not fond of business; and the Countess-dowager thinks I am unequal in my health to severe attention upon any subject. I am very fortunate in possessing a relation who considers it almost an amusement to overlook the concerns of Bedinfield."

"Julia was always extremely clever," exclaimed Christobelle, anxious to do justice to her talents. "Julia was always considered extremely clever at Wetheral."

"No one can equal my mother in cleverness, Miss Wetheral: every thing is in excellent order, and I am always supplied with money when I require it. The Countess-dowager attends even to my private accounts: I have no trouble."

"But *Julia* attends to her own expenses, Lord Ennismore?"

“ The Countess-dowager is kind enough to attend to every thing, Miss Wetheral.”

The library-door opened, and the “ Countess-dowager” appeared, leaning upon Julia’s arm. She bantered Christobelle and her son upon their long absence.

“ You are as partial to reading the titles of books as Dr. Johnson, if that has been your occupation. My lord has been very anxious to do the honours properly, Miss Wetheral.”

“ We were not altogether talking of books,” replied his lordship, mechanically offering his arm to Julia.

“ What could interest you so much, Miss Wetheral? If books were not your subject, let us also enjoy your remarks.” The Countess fixed her eyes upon Christobelle with a searching expression. Christobelle coloured, but remained silent.

“ My dear mother, we were talking of you,” said Lord Ennismore, taking her hand.

“ Of *me*, Augustus? I cannot think I can form a subject for Miss Wetheral’s contemplation. Pray let us return into the drawing-room.” This was spoken in a tone of slight displeasure.

“ I never think any one can speak of you, my

dear mother, without pleasure. I like to talk of you."

"I am sure, dearest mother, you are the subject of conversation to thousands," cried Julia, with tenderness, laying her hand upon her ladyship's arm.

"My dear children, you are very flattering in your affection." Lady Ennismore's countenance resumed its bland expression. "I must feel happy in the love of two beings so dear to me. May we always continue united, my beloved children! Miss Wetheral, you are surprised at this little scene."

The group returned into the drawing-room. Lady Ennismore arranged the whist party, as she arranged every thing connected with Bedinfield, and Christobelle sat near the table, reading her favourite Shakespeare. The whist party broke up to partake of a slight refreshment, and it was then time to separate for the night. Christobelle did hope Julia would have accompanied her to the tapestried chamber, but she retired with Lady Ennismore, after "good nights" were mutually expressed. Christobelle was escorted to her room by her father in silence. She wished much to speak to him, and inform him of her short colloquy with Lord Ennismore ;

she therefore begged him to stay with her a few minutes.

“Come into my room, Chrystal; I have no lady’s maid to overhear my words.”

Christobelle crossed the broad gallery, and entered the crimson chamber. It was hung with dark crimson satin, as gloomy but not so appalling as the tapestried apartment. She then told her father the substance of her conversation in the library, and also remarked upon Lady Ennismore’s look of displeasure. He listened gravely to the disclosure, and observed, “Yes, I fancied so—I can see it all.”

“What do you see, papa?”

“You would not comprehend my views if I expressed them, my love; your life is young, and at present my remarks would be mysteries to your innocent mind. The world will gradually enlighten you to evil, when your part is to be played upon its stage: till then, remain untainted and happy. But when you enter upon its cares, bear in mind the necessity of holding fast integrity. It secures happiness here and hereafter. And now, good night, my dear Chrystal.”

Christobelle returned to her room, and beheld the large eyes of a giant-centurion fixed upon her. She could not struggle against alarm;

and Taylor sat by her till she fell asleep. She endeavoured to amuse her young mistress by a description of the scenes which were taking place in the lower department of Bedinfield.

“Lord help us, Miss Wetheral, if you could but see the pride of the two butlers, Mr. Spice and Mr. Hornby! Miss, they won’t look at, or speak to, the other servants; and the great housekeeper, with her two helpers, sit in a room by themselves. Mr. Spice only stands by the sideboard, and Mr. Hornby behind my lady the Countess, just to look at. And do you know, miss—poor Miss Julia that was—is considered nobody at all. Every thing is my Lady Countess.”

“Do they think so, Taylor?”

“I hear the servants that I associate with, miss, make strange observations, as we do sometimes talk over things amongst ourselves; and they say that the Lady Countess is a very determined woman, and manages my lord completely. Poor Miss Julia has no power at all; but the Lady Countess is very kind-spoken to her, and they say Miss Julia is very content to be put on one side.”

“Lady Ennismore, if you please, Taylor.”

“Ah! she is no Lady Ennismore, miss, un-

less she has her proper situation in this house. As to my lord, miss, I assure you the footmen speak of him in a very odd way."

"In what way?"

"Why one of them said openly at supper the word 'ass,' Miss Wetheral; and another said he couldn't follow his nose without the Lady Countess at his side: they all pity poor Miss Julia, and say she is too good for him."

"I shall tell papa, Taylor."

"Oh, gracious, Miss Wetheral! don't bring me up about such things; I really couldn't appear, upon my oath, before any one, for the world. I must hold my tongue."

"No, speak on, Taylor: you must talk me to sleep."

"Well, indeed, miss! The footman, Number 7, as they call him — for they are called out by number, not by name — has been some years at Bedinfield; and he says the Lady Countess had great power over her husband, the late lord. She was always bland and agreeable to speak to, if nothing offended her, but Number 7 says it was a sight to see her *angry*. She never forgave any one, and will allow no one to differ with her. Miss Julia is so gentle! that's one thing; she

will never offend ; but if she ever does, Number 7 says it will be the worse for her.”

“ How can Number 7 tell any thing, Taylor ? ”

“ Oh ! Miss Wetheral, he says things very hard to believe ; but no one contradicted him. He says his lady will never part with power till she is in her grave, and that Miss Julia will only lead a quiet life while she gives way. I think my Lady Kerrison and my Lady Ennismore have not done so well, miss, though they are quality. I must say I should like to be first in my own house — I should expect — if my husband — indeed, says I—”

Taylor's words appeared broken, and they gradually became extinct. Christobelle fell asleep during her lengthy speech.

CHAPTER XIX.

Lady Ennismore and Julia were already in the breakfast-room, when Christobelle and her father descended the following morning. Lord Ennismore was seated with a decanter of water on the table before him; and he had sundry bottles stationed round it, from which he weighed certain powders, and immersed the whole in a goblet of water. His lordship was too occupied to rise upon their entrance, but he apologised for the apparent want of gallantry.

“Excuse me, Sir John Wetheral, and also I entreat your pardon, Miss Wetheral, for my sitting posture; but I am, at this moment, preparing my morning draught. I shall, however, have much pleasure in drinking your health, when the preparation is completed.”

“I will stand proxy to your words, my dear Augustus,” said the Countess; “I am anxious

about the given quantities of the powders, and entreat you to be careful in examining the measures. Three grains, I know, is the proper quantity. Three grains of each. My dear Miss Wetheral, I hope you slept well. Sir John, I am going to carry you with me per force, round the park. Three grains only, my dear son."

"Thank you, my dear mother; I am very accurate: I have just concluded my dose."

Lord Ennismore stood up with an air, which he intended should be picturesque and gallant. His lordship held the goblet in one hand, and a tea-spoon in the other, as he bowed low to Christobelle and her father.

"I have the honour to drink to your welfare, as also to express our pleasure at your conferring upon us the honour of your company." His lordship then stirred the liquid into a state of effervescence, and drank the contents of the goblet. Julia extended her hand to receive the empty goblet, but the Countess prevented the action.

"No, my dear Julia, I will receive it from my son. I know you are not fond of powders and effervescing draughts; young people seldom like them. Let me take the glass from your husband." Her ladyship perceived the goblet was not quite

relieved of its contents. “ My dear Augustus, I am not easy. I wish I possessed the calmness of Julia, but I never *shall* be so self-possessed ; I am always in little alarms about you. You have left a wine-glassful in this goblet, and you will not feel its beneficial effects.”

Lord Ennismore’s satisfaction was observable at the care expressed by his mother’s remarks. Julia was totally ignorant of any concealed purpose lurking in her ladyship’s alarm. She only smiled at her mother’s perfectly unwarranted fears, and playfully jested at their unfounded use. The Countess patted Julia’s cheek.

“ My dear love, you cannot know a mother’s agonising, though, perhaps, foolish fears. A young wife is not aware of the nature of unpleasing symptoms, such as I fear I see arising in my son’s system. Sir John, I think we may assert it as a fact, that a parent’s anxiety is even more keenly acute than a wife’s alarm.”

Sir John did not agree with her ladyship. He thought parental pangs must be to every heart a bitter trial ; but a wife’s welfare, or a husband’s health, must be a paramount interest. To his idea, a mother’s affection must bow to that of a wife.

“ You think so, Sir John ?” The Countess

smiled bewitchingly upon her son. "I believe I did my duty to my lord; I think I devoted myself to his wishes; but I surely feel a more intense love for my son. Perhaps," continued the Countess, sighing, "perhaps his very delicate health interested my feelings too powerfully for my repose."

"I am, and must be," said his lordship, in most sententious tones, "extremely fortunate in possessing a relation so interested in my well-doing. I am sure my excellent wife feels for me a proper and lively affection; but, as the Countess-dowager remarks, there is want of reflection in the young, which only the more aged gain by experience."

"My dear lord," exclaimed Julia, with gentle earnestness, "I should be the only proper attendant; and I should be a most willing one, too; if you would allow me to mix your medicines — but Lady Ennismore has so frequently assured me. . . ."

"Come, come, my sweet Julia, away with self-upbraidings, or upbraiding of any nature! I bear witness to your worth and kindness; let us proceed to despatch our breakfast, that I may claim Sir John's company." The Countess al-

lowed no pause in the conversation to enable Julia to continue her observation.

“ Sir John, I look forward to great commendations on your part. My son’s taste is admirably set forth in the new drive, which comprehends a circuit of three miles. My dear Miss Wetheral, you have a fine lady’s appetite : surely Bedinfield will effect a change. I am sure my Julia will enjoy an hour or two of chat with you, my young friend, while we are absent. A little chat upon Wetheral topics. Julia talks with so much fervour of her friends in Shropshire !”

“ I wish they would all think of me with equal interest, and become better correspondents,” observed Julia, energetically.

“ Talking of correspondence,” said the Countess, addressing Sir John, “ how few of our earliest friends ever continue to keep up the delightful intercourse of extreme youth. So many new objects, so many new perceptions ! We rarely can long persevere in the course of our early career.”

“ My daughter’s friend makes the same remark. Miss Wycherly complains of Julia’s silence,” observed Sir John.

“ I have written frequently, papa,” cried Julia,

her whole figure becoming animated with the subject. "I have even invited Penelope to Bedinfield, without receiving an acceptance or denial. What can my friend plead in extenuation of her neglect? I did expect to be summoned to her marriage. I promised to attend her summons."

"You did not inform me of this arrangement, Julia," remarked the Countess; "I was not aware of the intended pleasure of another visit into Shropshire."

"I did not answer for *you*, dear mother. I was not aware at that time of your intention to reside at Bedinfield. I only assured Penelope, Lord Ennismore, and myself, would swell her train."

"You have changed your resolution, of course," said the Countess, in a dry tone of voice.

"No, indeed: I should like to surprise Penelope. Papa, we will return with you to Wetheral, if my lord has no objection."

"No plan can give me greater pleasure, my love. Let us return together, if you please. If your ladyship will add your society, Wetheral will be proud to receive you. Lady Wetheral will rejoice to see you."

"Oh! let us all return with papa," exclaimed

Julia, turning to her lord with eagerness; “let us all return with papa to dear Wetheral!”

“I am sensible of Sir John’s politeness,” returned his lordship, “more particularly as change of air is beneficial to every constitution. I shall with pleasure revisit Wetheral, if the Countess-dowager has no engagements to prevent her quitting Bedinfield.”

“My dear mother, you are not engaged? You will accompany us, won’t you?” said Julia, affectionately and eagerly.

“I am grieved that it is out of my power to accept Sir John’s polite invitation,” replied the Countess, with much suavity.

“Oh! I am so sorry! but, my lord, *you* will take me to Wetheral; *you* will return with me into Shropshire,” continued Julia, anxiously watching the stolid face of her dull lord. “You have no engagement, Augustus?”

“None whatever, my dear Lady Ennismore,” was his lordship’s reply; “but if my mother cannot postpone her engagements, we had perhaps better defer our visit.”

“I have every hope,” said Sir John, bowing politely to the Countess, “I have every hope that Lady Ennismore will yet favour us with her company. Perhaps, upon a little consideration,

one or two engagements may give way, to do us honour."

"I will consult with my son," replied the Countess, with her most bewitching smile. "A visit to Wetheral must be a pleasure too agreeable to relinquish, if we can postpone less agreeable engagements. I shall not fail to draw upon my invention for excuses in *one* quarter. My dear Julia, I hope we shall accomplish a visit to Wetheral. I hope my lord's health will continue: but I do not like his pallid complexion this morning."

"Do I look unwell?" asked his lordship, in an anxious tone, "do I appear changed to-day, my dear mother?"

"I don't approve of that pale cheek, my dear son. Julia, do you notice a little hectic spot—a very small spot, just upon the cheek-bone?"

Julia looked at her lord's leaden face. "No, I do not discover a spot, I cannot perceive a hectic spot—do you, papa?"

"My dearest Julia, is it possible you cannot distinguish a little feverish appearance? I see it from this distance, with great uneasiness."

"Now, papa, you shall judge between us. Do you see any appearance of spot or fever upon my lord's cheek?"

Sir John put on his glasses with an air of grave solemnity. "Am I constituted judge in this matter?"

"Oh, yes, papa, you shall declare the precise state of the matter," exclaimed Julia, laughingly.

"No one must judge for *me*. No one can judge for a mother's quick eye," said the Countess, playfully, "but still in the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom; therefore, I should wish to hear Sir John's opinion."

Sir John Wetheral examined Lord Ennismore's cheek with great command of countenance: there was no spot, or even the slightest tinge of colour; all was colourless, still, and heavy: dull, dismal, and disagreeable.

"My good lord," he said, "I am pleased to join my daughter in her happy fearlessness; and still better pleased to be able to soothe her ladyship's apprehensions. I think there is nothing alarming in your cheek. Rather pale, but I can perceive no hectic tendency."

Lord Ennismore turned anxiously towards his mother. Her eyes were fixed apprehensively upon him: he turned towards Julia; she was engaged with the merrythought of a chicken. He again turned to the Countess.

“ My dear mother, you are not satisfied with Sir John Wetheral’s opinion : I see you think I am unwell, and you are always watching me, therefore, you understand my constitution better than any one can do. I don’t think I am very well this morning. I could almost fancy my head was uncomfortable.”

“ You never give way to fancy, my dear son, therefore, you are not well. I can read the expression of your poor heavy eyes this morning : I am very uneasy.” The Countess rose with some perturbation from the breakfast-table.

Lord Ennismore rose also. “ Excuse me, Sir John Wetheral, excuse me, Miss Wetheral, if I appear abrupt in quitting your company. I will retire, if you please, this morning ; I certainly feel very unwell, and a few hours quiet will be calming. Pray don’t rise, Lady Ennismore ; my mother will give me her assistance to my apartments ; my dear mother, will you be so kind as to give me an audience ?”

Julia rose, and offered her arm to Lord Ennismore, but he again declined her assistance. The Countess approached with exultation in her looks and manner ; but soft words were upon her lips.

“ I believe we old people are better fitted for nurses, my dear Julia. Your alarm, perhaps,

would be greater than my own upon any emergency, but an old head is more used to critical situations. My dearest love, will you accompany our friends into the sitting-room, and then join us; you will be very anxious to see the effect of my old-fashioned remedies. My dear Sir John, I will see you again to arrange our drive."

Lord Ennismore quitted the breakfast-room with a look of real dejection. His valet, who had been summoned, followed his lordship, as he leaned upon the arm of the Countess. Her implied suspicions had taken such deep root in the weak mind of her son, that his imagination led him to believe he was seriously ill. His lordship walked softly, with the air of a person who felt assured he had been suddenly seized with an alarming and painful malady: his person shrunk into greater insignificance, his eye wore a more heavy expression — he was the perfect illustration of Molière's "*Malade Imaginaire*," as he walked gently across the grandly-proportioned apartment. What a creature to possess a wife so lovely as Julia, and to be the representative of the earldom of Ennismore! to own the baronial halls of Bedinfield, and write himself a man!

Sir John Wetheral would not let Julia depart when they entered the sitting-room. He made her take a seat by his side upon the sofa, and he held her hand, while he gazed fondly upon her. Julia smiled, and asked him “if he was examining the hectic appearances upon *her* cheek.”

“No, my child, here are no symptoms of green and yellow melancholy; you look well, Julia, therefore, you *must* be happy.”

“Yes, papa, I am indeed happy. Lady Ennismore spoils me, and will not let me stir from her side, ‘lest the winds of heaven should blow too roughly on my cheek.’ She is all kindness.”

“And Lord Ennismore is indulgent, Julia, and makes you happy?”

“I wish he would not take so much medicine, papa; otherwise, he never contradicts me in any thing. I cannot think it wholesome to take such a quantity of medicine. The Countess encourages him, I think.”

“You love him, Julia?”

“Yes, pretty well, papa. Mamma told me I should like him better and better every day, when I was once married, but I can’t say that is quite the case. I like Lord Ennismore, though: he never offends me, except in the quantity of

pills and powders. I don't like him *better*, but then I don't think I like him worse."

"You are anxious to visit Wetheral again, my love?"

"Indeed, papa, I am. I want to find out why my friends have been silent. Mamma has behaved very ill: she has never written me a line, though I addressed her every month. I can't imagine what my friends are made of. The Countess warned me of all this."

"What can Lady Ennismore prophecy, who is so distantly known to your friends, Julia?"

"She tells me, papa, that every body is envious of my marriage, and that my friends will fall away, because all youthful friendships are hollow. Penelope has, indeed, proved how little my letters interest her."

"Indeed, Julia," exclaimed Christobelle, "Miss Wycherly has not received one letter from Bedinfield. She told me so very sorrowfully at Hatton."

"I cannot think that," returned her sister. "The Countess herself took my letters to seal, and order them to be put into the post-bag. Penelope must have received them, but she is preparing for her marriage, and Charles Spottiswoode engrosses her attention."

“No, indeed, Julia; remember Miss Wycherly’s message by papa.”

“I cannot understand it all,” replied Julia, as the tears rushed to her eyes; “I love all my friends dearly, but now I am Countess of Ennismore not a soul thinks of me, to keep up a correspondence. Mamma told me that rank bought every thing, yet I cannot purchase a line from my own home, ‘to bid God bless me.’ I am very unhappy about it sometimes, only Lady Ennismore comforts me, and says she loves me for a hundred friends.”

“Think no more of it, my love, we shall be all united at Wetheral soon, and you shall lecture Penelope before us in conclave.” Sir John pressed Julia to him as he spoke. She smiled through her tears.

“Oh, you are *all* included in my coming lecture! You are *all* delinquents! I thought I should have fainted when I heard of your arrival yesterday, so unexpectedly! I was flying down to you, but dear Lady Ennismore arrested my flight. She made me lie down, and take some of my lord’s horrid drops. She advised me, too, to receive you in the drawing-room; it was more becoming my station, and your demerits. I forgot station and demerits, when I heard your

dear name, papa." She threw her arms round her father's neck, and proceeded. "What care I for any one, like my own dear papa? I know I should be fonder of Lord Ennismore if he was not always mixing up draughts and lotions, and if he was more with me; but his rooms are near Lady Ennismore, and mine are in the left wing of this immense place."

"You do not mean to infer, my love, that you have separate apartments!" said her father, starting up from the sofa. "Four months of matrimony, and a separation already, Julia!"

"Oh, that's an old affair now, papa. Lord Ennismore had his rooms prepared near Lady Ennismore these three months, because he thought she understood the pennyweights and grains better than I do. I only see my lord at meals, and he is extremely attentive to me then, I must say; but I cannot like him as I should do if he consulted *me* about his medicines. I should learn the weights and measures in time, you know."

Sir John walked to the window, without making any reply. The Countess entered the room at the moment; she spoke kindly and feelingly to her daughter; at the same time

taking both her hands, and pressing them with affectionate solicitude.

“ My dear love, my lord is inquiring for you : he feels better, much better, but I have decided upon sending for Dr. Anstruther. He wishes you to sit with him ; he inquires for Julia upon all occasions, and I am now come for you. My son is full of regrets,” added her ladyship, turning towards her guests, “ that he should feel one of his little seizures at this particular moment, when he wished to do the honours of Bedinfield ; but he deposes me to act for him. He has insisted upon my ordering the *barouchette*, to drive Miss Wetheral and yourself to the plantations. My dear son will hope to be perfectly well at dinner : he is quite nervous about the plantations.”

Sir John appeared too engrossed with his own emotions to reply ; but he bowed to her ladyship’s speech. She turned to Christobelle.

“ My dear young friend, we shall return to luncheon ; therefore, as my daughter remains with her husband, you will, probably, be glad to accompany us in our drive. We shall set out in half an hour.”

Christobelle promised herself little pleasure in the drive, since Julia would not be with them,

but she would prepare to attend her ladyship's summons. The two ladies then proceeded towards the hall. Julia looked back at her father, as he seated himself near Christobelle, and smiled.

“Papa, I shall find out about the letters from Lady Ennismore. I am sure Penelope is wrong!”

“What is this little affair, Julia?” asked Lady Ennismore, with peculiar quickness.

“My friends say they have received no letters from Bedinfield, my dear mother. *You* know I wrote, for you were kind enough to seal my long crossed epistles. You told me they would serve me so!”

“I have often known fluctuations in correspondence among young people, my love. I used to fancy in my youth that I was particularly ill-used; but, when I look back, I perceive it was circumstances which over-ruled many events.”

Lady Ennismore continued speaking to Julia, but the distance prevented the substance of her remarks reaching her friends. Before the speech concluded, however, they had gained the door, which Lady Ennismore closed after their transit, and the subject was never more renewed. A

heavy sigh from her father arrested Christobelle's attention. She asked him if he was ill.

“Not in body, my dear child : my mind alone is wretched.”

“Oh, why, papa?” she exclaimed, in surprise ; “what makes you wretched in this beautiful place of Julia's? and Julia herself so well and happy !”

“There is no happiness with that dangerous woman, and that feeble son !” said her father, as he paced the room. “There is no peace for my poor child—ignorance, ignorance is her only earthly chance ! Why was I so weak, so deluded, to marry my poor child to a wretched idiot ?”

“Papa,” Christobelle uttered gently—“dear papa, who are you meaning ?”

He did not hear her speak ; her father apparently forgot her presence, for he continued walking.

“To give way to a woman's tears, when my judgment recoiled at the union, was folly, was wickedness. My heart will feel this, for I knew it was wrong, yet I sanctioned it by my presence. My poor Julia !—my poor, poor girl !”

Christobelle could not bear to hear her

father's self-reproach ; she went to him and took his hand.

“ Papa,” she said, “ don't say you have done wrong ; you never did wrong to any body. We all say how good and kind you are to us.”

He stopped and looked earnestly at her.

“ I have brought you up, Chrystal, with very different principles. I do not think *you* will bring me in sorrow to the grave. I think you will not sell yourself to perjury and ambition, as others have done.”

“ I will never do what you tell me not to do, papa.”

“ I hope not — I hope not, my child. I tell you not to marry a selfish, heartless man, as Clara and Julia have done, to secure wealth and rank, which they will never enjoy in peace— which they will never enjoy in respectability. It is a hard fate, but even the young must endure it if they barter peace for riches. God help them ! their poor mother has done this, and I did not act a father's part by them !” Sir John seated himself, and Christobelle knelt by him, and held his hand to her lips, and kissed it repeatedly. He was recalled to recollection by this movement, and he raised her from the attitude she had chosen, to a seat by her side.

“ My dear Chrystal, never repeat the remarks to any third person, which you have heard now from my lips. Remember the trust I have in your youth, because you have been my companion, and have learned to be silent, and to think a parent’s word sacred. You will understand my distress of mind at a future period ; but at this moment the knowledge of my suffering would be incomprehensible to you. In your steadiness of character I hope for much comfort hereafter.”

Christobelle did indeed hope to be his comfort in age, as he had been her shield in youth. Her words were simple, and her expressions were uttered with untutored energy, but they were sincere in feeling. His society, his kindness, his information, had been her happiness ; for they had shielded her from a mother’s reproaches, and her increasing loss of self-command. They had preserved her from ambitious feelings, by withdrawing her from her mother’s influence ; and, by offering her the calm pleasures of his study, instead of consigning her first young days to the infected air of Thompson’s room, and Thompson’s arguments, Christobelle had known only indulgence and gentle treatment. How could she help loving this estimable parent, or fail to

make his slightest wish the law of her heart? She did promise—and redeemed that promise—that she would never breathe to a human being the conversations which he entrusted to her sacred keeping.

Lady Ennismore was true to her appointment. She did the honours of the new drive with infinite grace, and conversed with Sir John upon every subject with fluent and astonishing information. Her ladyship appeared quite equal to guide the destinies of Bedinfield. Every improvement originated with herself, however carefully she subscribed Lord Ennismore's name to the plans; and her perfect acquaintance with agricultural economy proved her equal to the task of superintending her son's immense property. Christobelle was delighted with the polite tact of her manners, as she directed her conversation from John to herself. It is assuredly a great gift to possess that polite ease, and well-directed attention, which gives a flattering unction to the vanity of all who receive its plastic touch. It is the wand of a fairy which turns words into the pearls and diamonds of the little tale—which does so delightfully

“ Wash, and comb, and lay us down softly.”

No one could exceed Lady Ennismore in that

most fascinating, most dangerous gift of attraction. Christobelle felt under its spell, bound towards her by the silent and potent effects of soothed vanity. She felt she was of equal consideration with her father in Lady Ennismore's eyes; for her opinions were elicited, and listened to with marked attention. Christobelle was raised above the level of her understanding—she was gratified—she was delighted with Lady Ennismore. The dull drive which had been anticipated, passed pleasantly, even rapidly, to her charmed feelings; and Sir John confessed to her, that he could not feel surprised at her ladyship's powerful influence over the unsuspecting and gentle heart of Julia.

Lady Ennismore was equally fascinating at luncheon. She did not partake of the delicacies which tempted the eye, and impelled appetite; but her lively conversation almost recompensed them for the absence of Julia, whose excuses she tendered. "Lord Ennismore was certainly very unwell; he was suffering much pain in the head. His dear Julia never left her son when he had those wretched attacks. He could not endure her to be a moment from his sight; but she had deputed her to give her best

love to both dear relations, whom she hoped to meet at dinner, or at least, in the evening.”

But Julia did not appear at the promised hour. “Lord Ennismore’s symptoms increased. Dr. Anstruther was of opinion his patient was preparing for another of those alarming attacks. She greatly feared Julia would be confined to a sick room many days, but her son was so eagerly bent upon receiving every thing from Julia’s hand—so attached to his lady, it was delightful to witness such conjugal affection. Lord Ennismore almost increased the disorder, by regretting his inability to see his agreeable guests: the next visit to Bedinfield, her ladyship trusted, would be free from such a painful interruption of intercourse.”

The evening passed away, and Julia did not appear. It *did* seem strange that she could not make her escape to her family for a quarter of an hour. Why was Lord Ennismore so anxious for his lady’s society, so very much attached as his mother represented him to be, and yet allow her apartments to remain at such a distance from his own? Why was not his attachment manifested in that love for her society which would make them inseparable, like the Boscawens, like the Pynsents, nay, even like the unhappily assorted

Kerrisons? Surely, Julia might be replaced by the anxious mother, while she visited at intervals her own father! Christobelle was infinitely astonished at Julia's complete seclusion with Lord Ennismore, for she knew her strong affection to her own family, and the little anxiety she could suffer for a man whom she professed to like "pretty well!" This was not love, to compel that devotion of time and thought to her husband's comforts which Anna Maria would have shown to her honest-hearted and beloved Tom Pynsent. It was a line of conduct Christobelle could not comprehend, and her father did not enlighten her on the subject, when she expressed her sentiments to him at parting for the night. He doubtless felt and understood the whole system pursued by the Dowager Countess to sustain her power at Bedinfield; but Christobelle was too young to be initiated in the wiles of the human heart, and she wept to think her sister could absent herself so long from those who loved her, and who had journeyed so far to enjoy her presence.

The second morning's meal was ungraced by Julia still. Lord Ennismore was even "seriously" indisposed; and her ladyship spoke with feeling, and at great length, of her own parental anxiety.

Her mind was torn to pieces with agitation and alarm. She fancied sometimes, the mild air of the South of Italy would be necessary to the recovery of her son's health. Julia would be so confined at Bedinfield, she thought. The bright climate of Rome or Naples would be beneficial to both her children, and, perhaps, brace her own nerves. She had talked to Dr. Anstruther upon the subject, and he quite went with her in her ideas of Rome. "What did her dear Sir John think?"

Sir John could form no opinion. He was not acquainted with the nature of the attacks which afflicted Lord Ennismore, and Julia's health was excellent, if he was to judge by her blooming and healthy complexion.

"True, my dear sir; Julia does indeed give evidence of health, and a tranquil mind. I am most happy in the knowledge, indeed in her own assurance, that her heart is free from care. I have spoken to her this morning, and she seems delighted with the prospect of a continental tour. I am very uneasy about my son."

"Have you had medical advice from town, Lady Ennismore?"

"No: Dr. Anstruther is remarkably clever. My son, as well as myself, pin our faith upon

his advise. I am never easy without Dr. Anstruther. We could not consult a more intelligent medical adviser."

"As I purpose leaving Bedinfield early tomorrow morning, your ladyship may perhaps....."

"My dear friend, you must not quit us in this hurried way! Surely you do not leave Bedinfield so soon!" The Countess spoke in tones of regret, but her eyes betrayed her pleasurable feelings. "I must mourn my son's illness, since it removes you from us. The next visit must be at some moment more favourable to all parties. This has been an unfortunate occurrence. I must lament this very unfortunate occurrence."

"I wish to see my daughter before I quit Bedinfield," said Sir John Wetheral, with seriousness of look and manner. "I must see my daughter before I return to Wetheral: probably she will not be so closely confined to-day."

"I hope not—I will try to hope not," replied the Countess; "but my fears will not allow me to be tranquil. When our breakfast is concluded, I will visit our invalid again, and, if possible, release my dear Julia. She is very watchful and attentive, dear creature. I cannot

wonder at Ennismore's anxiety to have her with him. We will see what this hour has produced."

Breakfast was concluded in silence. The Countess lost her lively flow of spirits, and Sir John did not contribute his usual portion of pleasant conversation. The trio gradually became silent and sad, and Lady Ennismore, politely expressing her hopes that they should yet alter their intention of leaving Bedinfield, rose to visit her son. She hoped Julia might return to them, when she was with the dear invalid, to take her place; but, if a short time intervened, she trusted they would find amusement in the stores of the library, or in perambulating the grounds. All and every thing was at their command.

The father and daughter were alone for some hours. Each moment, as it sped rapidly on, was full of hope that Julia was on her way to gladden their sight, and delight their hearts; but, as time wore on, they feared some evil accident had befallen the unfortunate Lord Ennismore. The door at last opened, and the same attendant, who appeared at their entrance into Bedinfield, again presented herself.

"The Countess of Ennismore regrets the necessity of her absence, Sir John, but she cannot

quit my lord's apartment. I am deputed to bear her compliments, and the regret of the young Lady Ennismore. The Countess commands me to say the carriages are at your disposal, and her ladyship trusts you will excuse her presence till the hour of dinner."

"I fear his lordship is very unwell," observed Sir John, fixing his eyes upon the unwelcome messenger with an expression of strong disbelief in her statement; but she avoided meeting his gaze.

"I am commanded to unfold my message to Sir John Wetheral, but I was not authorised to speak beyond its purport. I must now return to her ladyship."

"Stay one instant," resumed Sir John, "and take back my answer. Tell your lady, I will not occupy the time and services, which appear to be required on Lord Ennismore's part. I will order my carriage immediately; but I wish for one moment to take leave of my daughter, Lady Ennismore, ere I leave her to the mournful task of watching by her patient. My daughter and myself are useless, since our exertions cannot benefit Lord Ennismore. I wish to see my daughter, if you please; and I shall be obliged by your conveying my wishes to one of her people."

The attendant of Lady Ennismore retired, and they were again two hours without receiving any interruption. The carriage had been some moments at the door, and Sir John was walking up and down the room with hasty steps, when a note was presented to him, upon a silver waiter, by Lady Ennismore's footman.

“ My dear Sir John,

“ I cannot wonder at your flight—this is a place of sorrow and sickness, unfit for the healthy and happy. May we meet soon again! Julia and myself dare not quit for a moment our beloved and suffering invalid—he is in great torment.

“ Yours most truly,

“ E. ENNISMORE.”

Sir John Wetheral rang the bell: a brief pause, and the footman reappeared.

“ Is Dr. Anstruther at this moment in the house?”

“ I believe the doctor is now with my lord, Sir John.”

“ I wish to see Dr. Anstruther the instant he quits Lord Ennismore's apartment.”

The servant bowed, and disappeared.

“ This is hopeless and helpless,” observed Sir John; “ I can only increase Julia's distress, by

remaining at Bedinfield. What use will it be to inquire into the machinations of the Countess, except to reap bitterness, and perceive my inability to rouse the torpid character of her son. My poor Julia's fate depends upon that artful woman's will. It is vain to look on, and witness that which I cannot control."

"But Lord Ennismore is very ill, papa," exclaimed the sorrowing Christobelle. "Lord Ennismore is very ill, and Julia cannot leave him to bid us farewell! Will he die, papa?"

Sir John made no reply to the hurried question. He was struggling with his own emotions. He led his daughter in silence through the file of footmen in the hall to the entrance-door, where his carriage waited, already packed and surmounted by Taylor. Hornby advanced to inform him of Dr. Anstruther's departure from Bedinfield; he had driven away before Sir John's message had been delivered to him. Sir John made no remark; he handed Christobelle into the carriage, and ordered the door to be closed: he did not enter it himself. Christobelle entreated him to join her. "My dear papa, where are you going to ride?"

"In the rumble, my love: the air will do me good. Take Taylor inside."

The exchange was made quickly. Sir John took possession of the rumble, which enabled him to commune with his own thoughts in silence, and they quitted for ever the magnificent home, which Julia's fatal ambition had preferred to the happy days of her singlehood, in the less courtly domain of Wetheral Castle. They left, for ever, the towers of Bedinfield, its wooded hills, its calmly beautiful and luxuriant scenery : they never more beheld its ancient walls, or visited the home of Julia's choice. In ten days after Sir John Wetheral's return into Shropshire, the Bedinfield establishment, including Dr. Anstruther, were on their road to Florence, and it was said Lord Ennismore's health had compelled the sudden and silently arranged movement.

CHAPTER XX.

A twelvemonth passed by, unmarked by any event, save the marriage of Miss Wycherly. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Spottiswoode resided at Lidham, and Sir John Spottiswoode had returned to England, to inhabit his almost desolate property in Worcestershire. Lady Spottiswoode and her daughter were invited to remain with him at Alverton, to enliven his home, till he could endow it with a wife; but Sir John's fastidious taste gave little promise to the gay partakers of Lady Spottiswoode's festivities, that she would be restored to her once agreeably filled jointure-house, in the Abbey Foregate.

Worcestershire, also, lay wide and far between the growing loves of Miss Spottiswoode and Mr. John Tyndal; but there was resolution on his side, and encouragement on the part of the lady; and the repeated absences of Mr. John Tyndal

from Court Herbert, gave rise to much observation and prophecy in their circle. The Tom Pynsents were at Hatton, rejoicing in the prospect of an heir to its prosperity; and Mrs. Pynsent's ecstasy could only be equalled by the anxiety she manifested to keep Anna Maria's mind easy. Her whims, in every respect, were to be met with instant fulfilment. Mrs. Pynsent formed a most amusing contrast to the fearful Miss Tabitha Boscawen.

Christobelle was domesticated at Hatton a fortnight before her sister's expected confinement. Her father rejoiced in her visits, for she was then withdrawn from her mother's increasing petulance—a petulance, which began to vent its puerile vehemence upon every being within her power, and which fell upon Christobelle with peculiar violence.

The extremity of her ladyship's patience had given way under repeated disappointments connected with Bedinfield and Ripley. Those matches, which she had most fondly considered her own scheme, prosecuted to their close, by her own determination and skill, in the very face of her husband's objections, had given her no satisfaction. Bedinfield was now deserted by her daughter for a foreign land; and Sir Foster

Kerrison had interdicted the meeting of Clara and her mother at Ripley. He considered Lady Wetheral an aider and abettor of his wife's violent spirit; and, having once forbidden the presence of her ladyship within the walls, the gibing and bitter reproaches of Clara strengthened and decided his prohibition. Vexed and irritated by these occurrences, Lady Wetheral could not turn her attention to her happily-established Anna Maria, or the gay-hearted Isabel, with her darling child: she forbade Christobelle ever offending her ears with sounds so repugnant to her taste.

“Hold your tongue, Bell. I do not choose to be lectured by a pert girl of thirteen. What is Tom Pynsent to me? I detest a man who can tamely bear to live shut up with those people at Hatton; and who can bear the avarice of Boscawen, driving a stupid pair of horses, when he can so well afford four? Those were your father's matches, not mine.”

“I thought you particularly wished Tom Pynsent to propose to Anna Maria, mamma?”

“Hold your tongue, Bell.”

Christobelle was happy to escape from the cares of Wetheral, to the perfect freedom of Hatton. Provided every one spoke their mind, and that mind was free from mean pride, Mrs.

Pynsent was content. Her good-humour to those she loved was proverbial, as her detestation of folly was public. Luckily, Christobelle was ranked among her favourites at her first visit.

“ You young thing, so you are come to Hatton, are you? Shake hands. I shall like *you*, because you showed a good feeling about your dare-devil sister Kerrison, some time ago. I like warm-hearted people, without nonsense and pride—here’s a welcome to you, you great, tall, good-looking thing.” Mrs. Pynsent wrung her hand with a good will, which gave severe pain. Christobelle tried to smile.

“ What, my welcome is rough, is it? Make a face at once, and don’t pretend you are pleased, when you are no such thing. There’s your sister—she’s a proper little tub—and there’s Tom, as handsome as ever—and here’s my Bobby, with the gout; but you may go and shake hands with him. The poor soul can’t wag from the sofa.”

Christobelle was received affectionately by all and each. Mrs. Pynsent was full of kind inquiries. Some fell kindly upon her young friend’s heart, and some remarks had better have been left unsaid.

“ Well, and how is your father, my young

one? A better creature never walked this earth than Sir John. How is he?"

"Quite well, and desires his compliments."

"Ay, to be sure—and my lady, how is she?"

"I left mamma very unwell."

"Too-too! she can't be ill. Hasn't she married her daughters to two mad scamps, that her heart was set upon? What is she ill about? Can't she get *you* off, just yet, that she is so dull? She had better throw you at Selgrave's head. Well, and how is my pretty Mrs. Boscawen?"

Christobelle gave Mrs. Pynsent a full account of Isabel's health, and her happiness at Brierly.

"Very proper; I am glad to hear it. That was your father's match, missy. He valued a good man. Lord, Tom, what are you doing there, with Anna Maria?"

Tom Pynsent was removing a basket of apricots from his lady's vicinity.

"I won't let my wife eat these unripe things, to make herself ill, and bring on all sorts of queer feelings. Upon my soul, you have eaten six half-ripe apricots; you have eaten sour things enough to kill an old fox, much less a little delicate creature like yourself."

“Just one apricot more, Tom,” said Anna Maria, coaxingly.

“By Jove, I’ll throw them out to the dogs, Anna! You shall not eat such trash.”

“Just *one* more, Tom,” continued his lady, advancing her hand towards the basket, and looking half-beseechingly, half-saucily, at him.

“Upon my word, you are enough to drive a man distracted! I declare you are more trouble to me than the kennel!” cried Tom Pynsent, unable to resist her *minauderie*, and again surrendering the basket of apricots to her grasp. “I’m sure I hope this won’t happen every time.”

“Ha, ha,” cried Mrs. Pynsent, “and that’s the fear, is it, Master Tommy? Give up the fruit, and let her eat as much as she likes. Do you remember, Bobby, how I gobbled your pines, once upon a time?”

Mr. Pynsent looked up from his newspaper, and shrugged his shoulders. “I remember a good deal, Pen.”

“I’ll be bound you do, Bobby.”

Anna Maria now expressed a wish to walk with her sister into the flower-garden. Tom rather demurred at her descending the long flight of steps. Mrs. Pynsent would allow no opposition.

“Come now, Tommy, let the poor thing hobble about, if she wishes it; and, if she drops down, pick her up again. I hate a poor unfortunate woman to be refused any thing. I am sure it’s no sinecure to be such a roundabout.”

Tom Pynsent was easily persuaded into measures which he endured pain in refusing to his lady. His affectionate heart was only anxious to do right by a creature, whose very footsteps he worshipped; and his watchfulness proceeded from the fear of losing that which was dearer to him than light or life. Anna Maria revelled in the very wantonness of happiness, and she delighted in drawing forth her husband’s attentions, by every little inventive art. She loved also to rouse his alarms; and enjoyed, with rapturous delight, the expression of his honest affection.

One morning, as the ladies sat at work, amused by Tom’s account of the progress of his kennel, Anna Maria suddenly sank back upon the sofa, and, by her closed eyes, and the work falling from her hands, Mrs. Pynsent did indeed fear some fatal termination to her son’s hopes. Tom Pynsent sat rooted to the spot; his clasped hands and trembling lips exhibiting every appalling alarm. Mrs. Pynsent and Christobelle

flew to Anna Maria's assistance; but the apparently dying victim opened her eyes, and laughed heartily, exclaiming—

“ My dear Tom, I wanted to see how you would look at my death; come to me, Tom, and don't look so overpowered.”

Tom Pynsent flew to her, as the blood rushed violently into his face, by the reaction of hope against the horrors of despair. He threw his arms round her, as she looked half terrified at her own thoughtlessness.

“ By all that's horrible, Anna Maria, never give me such a useless fright again; I might have had an apoplectic stroke. How could you play me such a devil's trick?”

She stroked his cheek, as she whispered, “ I just wanted to amuse myself, Tom.”

“ Yes, it might amuse *you*, but what sort of amusement was it to me? What would you have done, if I had dropped down dead with the shock?”

“ Cried, Tom,” answered Anna Maria, putting her finger to her eye, and looking demure. Tom Pynsent looked at her with admiring affection.

“ Upon my word, if you play me this trick again, I'll—”

Anna Maria placed her hand upon his lips,

and a little playful scene ensued, which ended in the usual way. It gave the happy wife the delight of witnessing her husband's sincere alarm and love, and Tom Pynsent was charmed with the little ruse, which gave a zest to the day's routine. "It was," he said, "one of those sly tricks which his little wife acted so prettily, doubling and harking back, like a knowing vixen fox. He thought a wife and a fox were devilish alike in their politics."

It was a pleasing sight to witness the happy understanding which prevailed among the members composing the family circles at Hatton. If Mrs. Pynsent failed—and fail she assuredly did, in the elegances of polished life—yet her domination was kindly wielded over those who lived under her roof. She respected and loved her husband, though his cognomen of "Bobby" threw a shade of ridicule round her gentlest expostulations. She loved her Tom with that blind enthusiastic fondness which extended itself to every thing connected with him. She loved his wife, because she belonged to Tom—the dogs were Tom's dogs — Bobby was Tom's father. Hatton would, eventually, belong to Tom; therefore, her heart warmed to every one around her. Was not Christobelle also a favourite? Had she

not come to Hatton to *see* Tom?—Mrs. Pynsent cautioned Anna Maria not to repeat her fainting-fit, or trench upon the sacred ground of her husband's feeling heart too closely; at present she was safe, and Tom was pleased, so it did not signify.

“The deuce take the best of them, my dear; if they are often called upon for sorrow, it hardens them, as the cold air stiffens your sticks of lollypops. Tommy is but a man, after all; and the dog must be amused, not frightened. What an owl he looked, bless his heart!”

Sir John Spottiswoode appeared suddenly at Hatton. He was staying at Lidham, and excusing among his friends in Shropshire. Mrs. Pynsent insisted upon Sir John becoming their guest, and enforced her request in her usual quaintly expressive style.

“Here, hollo, Sir Jacky, you can't think of leaving us at the rate of a sneaking call! Make yourself at home, man; and stay with us till Tom's wife —”

An earnest look of entreaty from Anna Maria checked the rapidity of Mrs. Pynsent's speech. She hesitated.

“Stay with us, Sir Jacky, till—I'll be hanged if I know what I was going to say!—if you

haven't put every thing out of my head, Anna Maria. What did you think I was going to say? I wasn't going to talk like Sally Hancock."

"Stay with us, Spottiswoode," cried Tom Pynsent, "and we'll have a field-day; such a one as you never saw in Italy."

"Oh, those outlandish places, and those snivelling Frenchmen!" exclaimed Mrs. Pynsent: "come to us, and here's a pretty girl, worth all your mamzells."

Mrs. Pynsent pointed Sir John Spottiswoode's attention to Christobelle. The timid girl felt a poignant shame, which caused deep blushes to suffuse her face and neck, and she placed herself behind Anna Maria, till an opportunity offered to escape from the room. When she returned Sir John had departed, but he was to become a guest at Hatton for some days, on the following morning. He was to accompany Mr. Wycherly and the Charles Spottiswoodes to dinner. Mrs. Pynsent rallied Christobelle upon her flight from the sitting-room.

"Why, hollo, my young one, you seem to shrink under a little notice. That won't do for my lady, some time hence. You must expect notice now. Don't be a fool — an affected fool

— or any thing of that kind ; but you must expect to hear yourself admired. Why, you're a monstrous fine girl, and, if you don't beat Lady Kerrison in a few years, my name is not Pen Pynsent."

Christobelle blushed more deeply and painfully than before.

"Come, Miss Bell, try to bear beauty without reddening so furiously. Don't be argued into selling it to the best bidder, and you need not be ashamed of it."

"My dear Miss Wetheral," said the peaceable Mr. Pynsent, "come and shelter yourself under my wing."

"A pretty wing you have got to shelter her with, Bobby."

Mr. Pynsent, to use a parliamentary expression, "withdrew his motion," and Christobelle was again exposed to his lady's jests.

"Now, I say, Sir Jacky would be a proper sort of beau for you, Miss Bell. A long-legged fellow, as steady as our best hound, with a nice estate, and a good temper."

"I would rather not leave papa," answered poor Christobelle, almost inclined to weep.

Mrs. Pynsent laughed heartily. "A good joke this, for Jacky. I only mention it, my

dear, to be beforehand with my Lady Wetheral. When she tells you of Sir Jacky's estate, you can say it came from *me* first. I recommended the spec, mind. It will be droll enough if I get before my lady, in a matrimonial speculation."

"Come, now, mother, don't tease my friend, Bell," cried the kind-hearted Tom. "I won't allow any teasing. I shall bespeak Bell for my second wife; no one else shall have her."

"What is that?" asked Anna Maria, raising her head from examining a painted screen.

"Why, Bell has promised to be my wife, the very next time you die, you little rascal." Anna Maria snapped her fingers at him with a smile; Tom Pynsent snatched a kiss, and proceeded.

"If any one teases sister Bell, I shall feel called upon to take her part, so run and put on your habit, Bell, and we'll have a scamper with all the dogs."

Thus ended Christobelle's trouble and blushes; and Mrs. Pynsent good-humouredly forbore to distress her in future, by recurring to her appearance, or extolling the fortune and long legs of Sir John Spottiswoode.

When every species of joke was withdrawn, which caused feelings of annoyance, Christobelle

liked Sir John Spottiswoode's society. He had travelled much; and she loved to listen to his accounts of the places he had frequented, and the objects he had observed with interest. Sir John was sparkling in his descriptions, and he saw that Christobelle lent an attentive ear to all his communications; a flattering circumstance, even though the listener proved a girl of thirteen. They were the best friends in the world. Christobelle loved to question him upon foreign subjects, and his very easy manners made her cast away gradually the alarm and restraint of her first acquaintance with a man so much her senior in age and mental acquirements. Sir John had seen the Ennismores at Florence. They were very gay, and Julia was considered the loveliest Englishwoman in Florence. Her society was greatly courted, and there was a Colonel Neville who was deeply attached to her. Every body pitied Colonel Neville. The Countess encouraged his attentions to her daughter-in-law, which made poor Neville's case more pitiable. The young Lady Ennismore had given no occasion for remark, for her conduct was unimpeachable, but poor Neville was sacrificed. He could not tear himself away, when Sir John quitted Italy. He was lingering near Lady En-

nismore. It must be a case of strong temptation, he thought, for the young Countess. Neville was a fine agreeable fellow, and Lord Ennismore looked more fit for the grave. Pen Spottiswoode was extremely uneasy about her old friend.

In such interesting subjects, Christobelle's attention was deeply fixed; and, whether they rode or walked, she generally found herself by the side of Sir John Spottiswoode. Mrs. Pynsent winked her eye, if their glances met upon these occasions, but she refrained from making any remark, except by implication.

“I say, Miss Bell, if you would rather not ride to-day with an elderly man, give me a hint, and I'll get you off.”

“Here, hollo, Miss Bell, don't do any thing disagreeable to your mind. Shall Tom give you his arm to-day? I dare say, like the rest of us, you prefer variety.”

Mrs. Pynsent would not allow Christobelle to return to Wetheral at the appointed time. “She was a steady tight kind of a lass, and the deuce a step should she make towards her dull home. She need give herself no trouble. *She* would settle the concern with Sir John. Christobelle should stay over Tom's confinement — he would

suffer quite as much as his little wife — and Jacky Spottiswoode should stay too. It would make Tom comfortable, when madam was in the straw.”

So it was decided to be, and both continued at Hatton, enjoying long walks, and assisting each other in dispelling gloomy apprehensions from the mind of the affectionate and anxious husband. Tom Pynsent’s apprehensions increased as Anna Maria’s hour drew near, and his mother taxed her memory for calming and comfortable precedents.

“Tom, don’t drop your lip, like Sally Hancock. Why, there’s Kitty Barnes, with fifteen enormous purple-faced children: she is alive at this moment. And look at Polly Mudge, the whipper-in’s wife, who they thought must die; isn’t she hanging out the clothes, and handing the baskets along, as brisk as your three year olds?”

“Anna Maria is so delicate; one can’t compare her with Polly Mudge,” said Tom Pynsent, in doleful tones.

“Well, then, what do you say to Betty Smoker, who always wanted bacon and greens, an hour after her troubles were over. She was a poor sickly-looking thing!”

“I hope my poor girl will do the same, if it’s a good thing for her,” replied Tom, in more cheerful accents.

“Let her eat and drink just what she likes, Tom. I won’t have her contradicted in any thing.”

At length, the day arrived which was to decide the fate of Tom Pynsent. The moment Anna Maria complained of feeling ill and restless, her husband fled to the kennel, and insisted upon some one bringing him intelligence every ten minutes of his wife’s health. Polly Mudge was deputed to relieve guard with Christobelle; and for nearly thirteen hours they were employed as carrier-pigeons, to announce bulletins from Mrs. Pynsent to the kennel, where Tom pertinaciously resolved to remain. It was the only spot where his mind could receive amusement, or which had power to distract his attention from the idea that his wife would not survive her confinement. He took no nourishment. He continued constantly employed with his men in examining the dogs, and suggesting improvements for their convenience.

At length, as the shades of evening began to fall, Mrs. Pynsent approached the kennel, waving her pocket-handkerchief: it caught her son’s

eye as he was preparing to give "Rattler" and "Beauty" a dose of salt. He bounded over the wall, and gazed earnestly upon his mother's face. She waved her handkerchief again in triumph, and gave a powerful cheer. Tom caught up the note, and it was re-echoed by the huntsmen, till their voices rose far and wide upon the air. Anna Maria had given birth to a son. Mrs. Pynsent embraced her son in ecstatic delight, and the tears ran down her cheeks.

"If it isn't as fine a boy as ever blessed my sight! Go and change that coat, my blessed Tom, and you shall see them both; but don't go smelling of the kennel, my pretty one!"

Tom Pynsent's heart swelled with a husband's and a father's best emotions, when he contemplated his wife and child. It seemed as though his Anna Maria had passed through death, and was raised again to his eyes and heart. He gazed silently upon them for some time in astonishment—he gazed upon the infant, as it lay by *her* side, who had suffered so much to give it life. He turned to his mother, who watched the workings of his countenance with delight, and, seizing her hands, he exclaimed,

"If John Spottiswoode and myself don't drink like fiddlers to-night, for this day's work!"

All was joy and congratulation at Hatton. Mr. Pynsent, in spite of gouty pains, insisted upon being carried to the door of his daughter's apartment, that he might enjoy the satisfaction of hearing his grandson cry. Mrs. Pynsent would not hear of it.

“Be quiet, Bobby, and nurse your crutch. To-morrow you shall all see our little, squalling puppy.”

Tom Pynsent did not drink like a fiddler with John Spottiswoode. He remained the whole evening in Anna Maria's dressing-room, listening greedily to the movements of her attendants—to the tone of her voice—and to the cry of the newly-arrived object of his affections. There he received refreshment, and he only left his station to retire at a late hour to his own room.

Christobelle was allowed to ride with Sir John Spottiswoode, to convey the intelligence to Wetheral the following morning. It was vain to hope for her brother-in-law's company: he was never absent from his lady's room. Christobelle was now quite unrestrained with her companion, and to be escorted by him alone was delightful: he could then attend to her, and she was free to chat, without fearing a wink or nod from Mrs. Pynsent. Her arrival, so attended, was pleasing

to Lady Wetheral, and Christobelle was welcomed, for the first time in her life, with smiles and kindness.

“My dear Bell, you are very kind to bring me such good news; I am such a poor thing in illness—so alarmed about those I love, that my company would have been worse than useless to dear Mrs. Tom Pynsent. Tell her how I rejoice in my grandson. Sir John Spottiswoode, we are very old acquaintance, though you have been so long absent. I hope you have brought back your affection for old friends?”

“Unchanged, Lady Wetheral, unchanged.”

“I am glad to hear it. You have been staying some time at Hatton, I think?”

“Nearly three weeks, attending very closely upon Miss Wetheral, who has had no other gallant.”

“My daughter has been receiving pleasure, I am sure.”

“I won't answer for that: but I can answer for her very polite reception of me, and that I have received great pleasure from her conversation.”

“Give a proof of your satisfaction, by staying at Wetheral, Sir John. My husband will be full

of regret, if you quit Shropshire without paying a visit to your old friends.”

“ I shall have pleasure in doing so, Lady Wetheral, when I leave Hatton.”

Her ladyship was greatly pleased by Sir John Spottiswoode's alacrity in accepting her invitation. Her manner wore its usual composure under excitation, but her sentiments transpired in the gentle suavity of her conduct towards Christobelle. She was the “ dear companion whom she missed—the only relic of past times—the child left to comfort her age, now all the rest were gone far distant from her.” Sir John Spottiswoode felt compassion and interest in her complaining affection. Christobelle knew from experience, that her mother's manner proceeded from some concealed motives, in which she herself was involved. It could not possibly proceed from any views which she might form upon Sir John's liberty, because he counted five and twenty years, and Christobelle was too young to become a speculation ; but she was assured there must be some powerful reason to effect such a startling change in her manner of addressing her. Where was the “ stupid, tiresome, unlovable Bell ” of their last meeting ? She was, like Sir John Spottiswoode, unchanged ;

but she was addressed as the creature who had long been the only object of her mother's cares and affection, since the marriage of Lady Kerison. This was incomprehensible.

Sir John Wetheral accompanied them in their return to Hatton, and Mrs. Pynsent was eager to exhibit her little charge. He was summoned into the dressing-room, where the happy grandmother was seated with the babe, preparing a little soaked biscuit in a small silver saucepan.

“Come in, come in, good folks : come in, Sir John Wetheral ; here's a chap for you ! Don't squeeze the young dog ! Sit down, Sir John. Where's Tom ? I'm just making a little meal for our young dog ! Tom says he shall be christened 'Rattler ;' but he shan't be named after beasts that perish.”

Tom Pynsent came softly forth from Anna Maria's room, and received his father-in-law's warm congratulations. Sir John took the infant tenderly in his arms, and gave it a blessing, as he had done by the child of Isabel. Tom Pynsent, almost purple in the face with happy feelings, watched every movement of its arms and eyes.

“Upon my soul, it's the prettiest thing I ever saw ! I do think, upon my soul, it is !”

“It’s just what you were at that age, Tommy,” replied his mother, as she assisted the nurse to prepare the biscuit; “it’s just such a little darling pudsey thing as *you* were.”

Sir John was allowed to see Anna Maria for one instant, to smile at her, but not to speak. All were then driven from the dressing-room by the mandate of Mrs. Pynsent.

“Off with you now, all of you. Wait in peace till Tom’s allowed to see company, and then we will have rare doings.”

Lady Wetheral’s visit was paid in great form, a fortnight after the birth of Anna Maria’s child, and Christobelle was to return with her to Wetheral when it was concluded. Mrs. Pynsent could not endure the protracted visit of a person equally related to the parties with herself.

“Such coolness,” she observed to Sally Hancock, who was sent for to see Tom’s child—“such cool ways of going on did not suit her ideas; and be hanged if my Lady Wetheral should see either mother or child!”

When her ladyship arrived at Hatton, Sir John Spottiswoode and Christobelle were in the drawing-room. She entered with graceful composure, and in excellent spirits.

“My dear Bell, I come with increased plea-

sure, knowing I am to run away with you. Sir John Spottiswoode, how do you do? Drawing, both of you, I see. Sir John's sketches must be your models, my love. I hope to be favoured with a sight of those sketches during your promised visit at Wetheral, my dear sir."

"I was giving Miss Wetheral a few hints on perspective."

"How very kind! My dear Bell, I hope you do credit to your instructor. I hurried here rather earlier than I generally drive out, in the hope of seeing Anna Maria for a few minutes. My Sir John assures me it is a lovely infant. I am happy she is doing so well; no fever, I hear; quite well, and with an appetite."

A polite and playful conversation was kept up between her ladyship and Sir John Spottiswoode, till Mrs. Pynsent appeared. She entered the room with the short, sharp step which always marked her dislike to the visitor.

"So you are come at last, my Lady Wetheral? A fortnight is a long time to keep away from one's flesh and blood!"

Lady Wetheral appeared perfectly collected, and unconscious of Mrs. Pynsent's rebuke. She bowed with polite good-humour.

"I trust I shall find my daughter awake. I

long to be introduced to my grandson—my first grandson, Mrs. Pynsent, for I have not yet seen Isabel's boy."

"I would not have let a fortnight pass without seeing my grandson at Brierly," replied Mrs. Pynsent.

"My dear daughter can perhaps receive me now," said Lady Wetheral, rising. "I am anxious to see her."

"Your dear daughter is fast asleep, and so is her infant."

Lady Wetheral reseated herself.

"A few minutes may find her awake. I may be fortunate enough to remain till she wakes."

"I don't think you will. Anna Maria has fallen into her first sleep to-day, and I hope it will last. The child is asleep with her, and Tom watches over them."

"Her sleep is quiet and refreshing, I hope?"

"We take great care of our invalids at Hatton. We don't leave them a fortnight to be nursed by other people."

Lady Wetheral affected innocence of all covert meanings. She addressed Sir John Spottiswoode.—

"My daughter tells me you saw the Ennismore party at Florence. Did you see my

daughter, Lady Ennismore, to speak? Did she trouble you with any letters or messages for her friends?"

"I saw Lady Ennismore—your Lady Ennismore—twice; each time she was accompanied by the Countess and Colonel Neville, and our interview was short. Lady Ennismore was looking very lovely."

"You mentioned your intended return to England to her."

"I did; but no letters were consigned to my care by her ladyship."

"It is very strange," returned Lady Wetheral, "that only one letter has reached us from Italy within twelve months!"

"Every body expected it!" said Mrs. Pynsent.

"I do not understand — I cannot quite comprehend your remark," replied her ladyship, bending gently forward, and sinking gracefully into her first attitude.

"Every body knew you had given your daughter to a weak man, governed by his mother; and every body expected the poor girl would be carried from her friends. Who ever heard of the old Lady Ennismore, and did not learn that she was a tartar!"

Lady Wetheral changed the subject.

“ You have probably brought some beautiful specimens of the different arts, Sir John ? Italy is full of rare antiquities.”

“ I have brought home a few things — a few pictures, and so forth, as all travellers are expected to do,” replied Sir John Spottiswoode. “ I hope Miss Wetheral will accept a little drawing of Naples, which I mean to present on one knee.”

Lady Wetheral smiled.

“ My dear Bell will receive your polite offering, with a determination to persevere in drawing, I am sure, Sir John.”

“ And our friend, Sir Jacky, is upon sale too,” cried Mrs. Pynsent. “ Here he stands, framed and glazed, for manœuvring mothers to contemplate !”

“ Sir John Spottiswoode is worthy many manœuvres,” answered her ladyship. “ Every lady will be forgiven for wishing her daughter happily engaged to worth and high principle.”

Sir John bowed low, and looked gratified by the compliment. Certainly Lady Wetheral ably sustained her claims to good generalship. She addressed Mrs. Pynsent.

“ Perhaps my daughter may be awake ; may I be allowed to enter her room ?”

“No one enters her room but Tom. She is not awake : I hope she will not think of it these two hours.”

Lady Wetheral acted upon her own often-expressed principle of never contending with “vulgar people;” she, therefore, rose to depart, and Christobelle unwillingly rose to accompany her. She begged her kindest love to her son and daughter.

“Yes, my Lady Wetheral, I’ll tell my daughter Tom, you have called at last,” interrupted Mrs. Pynsent.

“Her kindest love to Mr. and Mrs. Tom *Pynsent*, and she hoped to be more fortunate at a future visit.”

“I’ll tell Mrs. Tom, you will call in another fortnight, my lady.” Mrs. Pynsent advanced, and took both Christobelle’s hands. “You are a good, clever, handsome, gawky girl, and I am very sorry to lose you. Come whenever you like, and stay as long as you like ; you will be very welcome at Hatton. You don’t understand manœuvring yet, and I hope you never will. Never lose your blushes, and never sell yourself to the Evil One. Good bye, my dear, honest Miss Bell.”

Mrs. Pynsent shook Christobelle’s hands as

warmly at taking leave, as she had done at her entrance to Hatton; and her young friend departed in lowness of spirits. Mrs. Pynsent had shown her great kindness; and whenever her warm heart interested itself, it was impossible to resist her roughly expressed, but continual demonstrations of good will. Sir John Spottiswoode observed Christobelle's distress, as he led her to the carriage, after having deposited her mother.

“You are loth to depart, Miss Wetheral,” he said, with feeling.

Christobelle did not answer. The tears which fell uncontrolled witnessed that she *did* feel unwilling to quit the happy party. She entered the carriage in a deplorable state of weeping. Mrs. Pynsent looked from the window, which Tom had long named the “screaming window.”

“I say, Miss Bell, don't cry, and come again soon. Don't be down-hearted; your sister shall always see *you*.”

Christobelle heard no more, for the carriage moved on, and she caught only one glance of Anna Maria's window, as they drove round the wooded knoll, which shut out the last glimpse of Hatton.

CHAPTER XXI.

Lady Wetheral's reception of Sir John Spotiswoode was most flatteringly kind. His arrival had certainly taken great effect upon her spirits, for she rose, at a bound, from listless, irritable apathy, into the lively and amusing hostess. Her mind appeared again full of employment, and capable of every exertion. Sir John Spotiswoode was at once inducted into all the mysteries of Wetheral; and his peculiar tact in quietly amalgamating with the different elements of which they were composed, was admirably exhibited in his visit. Sir John became Christobelle's tutor in many accomplishments; he argued literary points with her father; and he was the depository of her mother's sentiments and complaints. Such a visitor was worshipped at Wetheral.

It was a new existence to Christobelle to enjoy

perfect liberty—to be allowed to enter freely into conversation in the boudoir—to be even consulted—and to roam through the grounds with Sir John Spottiswoode, without fearing harsh and unkind remarks. On the contrary, her intimate and improving acquaintance with Sir John was encouraged, and even urged forward, by Lady Wetheral. She approved the hours devoted to drawing, to music, and to botany; she smiled at their application, and thanked, in grateful terms, “the polite consideration of such a man as Sir John Spottiswoode, devoting his hours to the education of a perfect schoolgirl.”

Christobelle certainly had never known happiness unconnected with her father’s library till now. Never, till Sir John Spottiswoode arrived at Wetheral, had she entered the precincts of the boudoir without fear; and never, till his arrival, had she felt the enthusiastic pleasure of associating with a companion who could accompany her in her wanderings, and lead her taste, as an equal and a friend. She did truly love and venerate the kind, considerate Sir John Spottiswoode—the guide of her talents, and the companion of her walks and rides. She no longer lingered in the library, and listened for her

father's step. She had now to fulfil the allotted tasks of her new instructor, and his praise was the goal of happiness to her young mind. She only dreaded his departure from Wetheral; but Sir John still lingered, and he did not talk of Worcestershire.

The concerns of Ripley were now becoming the engrossing topic of the neighbourhood. Clara's haughty temper would not endure her husband's domination, and the scenes which now constantly occurred at Ripley, began to threaten some direful termination. Since Sir Foster Kerrison's interdiction of her mother's society, Clara's spirit had increased in audacity, and a separation was hinted at, among the reports of the hour. Sir John Wetheral heard the general rumour, and he sought an interview with Sir Foster, some time after the arrival of Sir John Spottiswoode at Wetheral. Sir Foster received him with great politeness. Sir John at once opened the subject to his son-in-law, and spoke most feelingly and sorrowfully upon the nature of the reports which had caused his visit to Ripley. Sir Foster winked his eye during the gentle remonstrance, and he tapped his boot with quickness, when the propriety of a separation was alluded to.

“Let her go—glad to get rid of a she-devil,” was Sir Foster’s laconic observation, as Sir John concluded his remarks.

“I think, Sir Foster, a separation would be advisable, since you cannot live together in peace.”

“Take her back with you, Sir John—devilish glad!”

“There was no settlement, Sir Foster; but you will make your lady an allowance out of your ample fortune?”

“Not a penny,” chuckled Sir Foster; “not a halfpenny, by G—!”

“You will not allow your wife to be a burthen to her friends, Sir Foster, since you received ten thousand pounds as her portion?”

“Let her stay at home, then, and behave.”

“My daughter is wrong, Sir Foster; I cannot excuse Lady Kerrison, but I am willing to receive her at Wetheral, to prevent the unpleasant recurrence of domestic quarrels. You will make your lady a stated allowance?”

“Take her clothes—nothing more, Sir John.”

“This is a most painful and disagreeable task,” observed Sir John; “but I must insist upon an allowance for Lady Kerrison, before I withdraw her from Ripley.”

Sir Foster chuckled and winked, as he repeated, "not a halfpenny—not a penny; let her take her clothes, and set off."

"I cannot take Lady Kerrison from your house, without a proper understanding that an allowance shall be paid to her regularly, Sir Foster."

"Then let her stay at home, and behave."

Since the resolutions of Sir Foster could not be shaken, her father resolved to seek an interview with Clara, and represent to her reason the turpitude of her conduct as a wife, and the punishment which must accrue to her in the lost affections of her husband, and the disesteem of her friends. Lady Kerrison was accordingly summoned to meet him in her husband's presence.

Clara entered the room with an air of haughty defiance, which vanished at the sight of her father. She rushed to him with open arms. "My dear father, take me away from this ruffian—I beseech you to take me away!"

Sir Foster winked and tapped his boot at the sight of his lady, but he offered no opinion during the dialogue which ensued between the father and daughter. It seemed as if Sir Foster Kerrison had no power to understand, or feeling to be interested in any thing which had not a

direct reference to himself. Sir John Wetheral led Clara to a chair, and spoke in tones of deep sorrow upon the subject which concerned so nearly her respectability and happiness.

“I did not think, Lady Kerrison, I should be doomed, by a child’s forgetfulness to her duty, to become a party against her. Report has loudly declared what I have unfortunately witnessed more than once at Ripley — that it has become the scene of a wife’s altercation with her husband.”

“It is the scene of a brute’s treatment of an unfortunate creature in his power,” retorted Clara—“it is the scene of violence, blasphemy, and disgust. I desire to be taken from this hateful place, and I will never see it more!”

“What has made you so forgetful of the duty you decided so rashly upon assuming, Clara, when you fled from your father’s house?”

“I know I did—I know I did!” shrieked Clara—“God help me! I did leave my father’s house, but my mother helped my flight, and beset me with her persuasions to marry that monster. She caused the mischief, and she must bear the blame. Who else had power to lead me into this horrible snare, or direct my thoughts to wretchedness?”

Sir John Wetheral was greatly distressed.

“Clara, it matters little now who guided you into this luckless marriage. You have vowed, at the altar, to obey the man you married, and your submission to Sir Foster is your duty and your vow.”

“I vow to detest him all the days of my life!” answered Clara, with scornful energy.

“Then,” said her father, rising, “farewell, Clara. I have no feelings to throw away upon a disobedient wife—I can be of no use.”

“Stay—stay,” exclaimed Clara, rushing forward, and detaining him—“stay, my dear father, and hear me! *You* never taught me to marry for this world’s wealth—*you* never taught me to barter happiness for a miserable title—for a low-minded, disgusting creature like that”—she pointed to Sir Foster with a shudder.—“*You* were always good and gentle, so stay and hear me.”

“I beseech you, Clara, to command yourself, and do not use this intemperate language,” replied her father, “or I cannot return: be calm, and be rational.”

“I will be so, papa; I should be very calm, if I did not see that man before me.”

“I will not listen to such improper, such wicked language, Clara : hear me !”

“I do, papa.”

“I have learned the fearful news of your wretched and open quarrels, from common report ; and public opinion is against you, Clara, as it ever will be against the daring and insolent wife.”

Clara’s neck and face became suffused with crimson, but she was silent.

“The world, Clara, saw your determination, when you eloped with Sir Foster ; let it see your determination to remain constant and obedient, now that he is your husband.”

Clara burst into tears, and her head sank upon her clasped hands, as she stood before her father. She seemed struggling for composure. Sir John seated her, and spoke strongly and feelingly upon her situation. “Loved by none, and respected by none, how was an imperious wife to pass her remainder of existence, condemned to opprobrium and contempt ? How could a woman presume to hope for happiness, when she was breaking down the proprieties of life, and offending her God by broken vows and unholy thoughts ?” Clara cast her weeping eyes upon Sir Foster, as he sat buried in his easy chair,

winking his eye, and appearing perfectly unconcerned at her distress. Her spirit rose again like the whirlwind at his sight—she started up. “Let the world talk on—let it upbraid me with every crime under heaven, I care not; but I will not live with *him*—I will not look upon *him*—my brain will not bear the constant misery of living in this place—this wretched place—the home of him who disgusts me so horribly! Oh, take me away for ever!”

“Would you return to Wetheral, Clara?”

“No, no, no, not to Wetheral; my mother is there. She only loves the wealthy and the high; and she drove me to all this! As I hope to meet with mercy, she drove me into this!”

“Be still, Clara, and listen to me once more,” said her father.

“Nay, hear *me*,” cried Clara, “and hear what months of misery have passed away under the influence of wine and laudanum. I have drunk wine, and I have drunk laudanum, but it only stills for the time! It is worse and worse to my brain! Oh, take me home, or take me somewhere—but here I cannot, will not stay!”

Sir John was anxious to remove Clara for a few days from her home of wretchedness, and he appealed again to the heart of Sir Foster Kerrison.

He begged to take Lady Kerrison, for change of air, to Wetheral. A few days only, he would ask for his daughter's society : a few days might be a short but beneficial visit to her own family. Sir Foster chuckled.

“ Take her home—never come back, I can tell her.”

“ I *will* return !” exclaimed Clara, with impetuosity ; “ I will never be turned out of your home : it was too great an honour ever to have entered it, but I will enter it now, whenever I please.”

“ Go along, you she-devil !”

Clara's violent spirit was not to be controlled. She struck Sir Foster upon the face, with the whole force of her delicate hand. The blow was trifling in itself, but it raised the equally strong passions of the person on whom it was directed. Sir Foster rose furious with passion, and kicked his lady with brutal and senseless anger. This scene determined her father no longer to endure his daughter's situation at Ripley. He ordered his carriage round, without a moment's delay, to withdraw Clara from the presence of her husband. It was a scene of horror to his excellent and indulgent mind.

Both parties had acted wickedly and weakly.

Clara deserved punishment for her insolent and unfeminine action, in striking her husband ; but it was unbecoming and dreadful in Sir Foster, to wreak his fury upon a defenceless woman. Ripley was not the proper home for Clara : since Sir Foster and herself could not preserve even the decencies of appearance, it was better to part at once. Sir John would place Lady Kerison in his own house—under his own protection ; and if Sir Foster persevered in declining to allow her a proper maintenance, the law should decide the question. The carriage drew up, but Clara was not in a condition to be moved. The violence of her anger, combined with her screams of terror, had ruptured a blood-vessel, and she sunk at her father's feet, deluged with the blood which streamed from her mouth. Clara was carried to her bed by her father and Sir Foster, who had rushed from his seat, and now winked his eye with astonishment and regret ; he bore his suffering lady in silence to her room ; and, though in spite of the chastening hand which had dealt the calamity, Clara twice endeavoured to push him from her, Sir Foster remained by her bed-side in nervous distress.

Sir John ordered the carriage to proceed instantly for his lady, who was desired to set out

without any delay, and an express was sent to summon Dr. Darwin. All was confusion at Ripley. Sir Foster, except when his eye caught the blood-stained dress of Clara, who lay almost insensible, could scarcely remember the events of the hour : he did not utter a word, or join in the orders which were issued by Sir John Wetheral ; but his usual habit of winking and making low short coughs, indicated his satisfaction that some one did act for himself and the unfortunate Clara.

Dr. Darwin arrived first, and his prompt mind applied the proper remedies which the sufferer's case required. He remained that day and night at Ripley. Lady Wetheral had most unexpectedly encountered the Hatton carriage as she drove out of the Wetheral lodges ; and, deeply as she deprecated Mrs. Pynsent's boisterous and offensive conduct towards herself, she now gladly availed herself of her useful and more powerful mind, under the emergency of the moment. The kind-hearted Mrs. Pynsent listened to her ladyship's statement, and took instant measures to render herself of use to the shocked and distressed mind of her companion.

She entered Lady Wetheral's carriage, and, sending her own back to Hatton, with a message to her son, she prepared to assist in the melan-

choly charge of Clara. She was well aware of her ladyship's perfect helplessness in situations which required promptness of thought and action; she was equally well assured that the dreadful circumstance must have originated in Clara's alarming explosions of temper. Mrs. Pynsent was therefore prepared to act the Christian part of adviser and nurse to the ill-fated Clara, and to the woman she despised. In the hour of need, Mrs. Pynsent developed all the real excellence of the female character.

Clara lay silent and exhausted, when Mrs. Pynsent and her mother entered her room. Her eyes rested with an expression of satisfaction upon the former, as she preceded her weeping companion to the bed-side; but they flashed with emotion when she perceived the figure of the author of her misery. She waved her hand, and would have risen in her bed, but Mrs. Pynsent prevented the movement. She placed Clara's hands with gentleness beneath the bedclothes, and signed to her, by placing her finger on her lips, that silence was absolutely necessary on her part. Clara again raised her hands, to wave her mother away, and exclaimed, in low and thick accents, "Don't let her come here. Is she

coming to lecture me about my misery?—it was her own doing.”

“Hush, hush,” whispered Mrs. Pynsent, “no one is come to lecture you—only to nurse you.”

“I saw my mother, just now; I know she is come to upbraid and jeer me. She made me marry a ruffian—and it roused my nature. I might have been better; but she would have me do it.”

“Hush, hush!” repeated Mrs. Pynsent, signing to Lady Wetheral to withdraw; “there is no one here but Dr. Darwin and myself.”

“Is there not?” said Clara, faintly.

“Lady Wetheral is *not* here, Lady Kerrison. Be calm, and be silent, I entreat you.”

“I will,” replied Clara, “but don’t leave me. Stay with me, Mrs. Pynsent.”

Mrs. Pynsent remained by the side of Lady Kerrison, till she slept; and her place was taken silently, and at a late hour, by the doctor, who enjoined the strictest quiet to be preserved. At eight o’clock the following morning, Clara woke from a slumber produced by narcotics. Dr. Darwin named to his patient, Lady Wetheral’s wish to watch by her bed-side, in the gentlest manner, and he approached her name with great caution; but Clara shuddered and became feverish.

“ Let no one speak of my mother,” she said, “ unless they want to kill me.”

It was useless to contend with Clara's wishes. The very allusion to her mother's name raised a discordant spirit, and threw her into almost convulsive alarms. Mrs. Pynsent, therefore, fixed herself at the bed-side of Lady Kerrison. Clara slumbered through the day, and appeared so calm, that the doctor quitted Ripley for a few hours. Mrs. Pynsent was all-sufficient to meet any little change which might take place before his return, but he did not anticipate any thing to give alarm, provided she was kept in profound quiet. A change, however, did occur. Clara woke suddenly, with very feverish and alarming symptoms. “ She had dreamt of her father, and she wished to see his kind face. She could not rest again, unless she beheld him.” Mrs. Pynsent renewed the dose of laudanum, and Clara again slumbered.

Sir Foster Kerrison suffered as much agitation as his nature was capable of enduring. He sat close to Lady Wetheral, in the sitting-room, and did not offer to resume his daily round of occupation. He did not visit the stable, or enter the kitchen; and his attention was riveted upon Lucy, as she glided to and fro, between the

dressing-room and sitting-room, to give from time to time the last accounts of the progress in the sick chamber.

Sir John Wetheral waited, in calm acquiescence, the issue of that day's events. He believed Clara to be beyond all hope of a permanent recovery, but he prayed in silence to the Giver of all good, that her life might yet be spared, to become a penitent, and gain self-command by her trials. Lady Wetheral wept severely, but she could not believe her own hands had prepared her child's sorrow. "It was harsh and ill-judged of Clara to decline her own parent, and accept the attentions of a comparative stranger, especially after the efforts she had made to procure her present eligible position. She deserved more gratitude at the hands of her children—but she had done her duty, and the world would do her justice." Nevertheless, her ladyship wept, and suffered sincere distress at her banishment from her daughter's couch.

Mrs. Pynsent was Clara's watchful and most kind attendant; from her hands she received her medicines without a murmur, and forbore to agitate herself with asking questions, according to her expressed wish. Towards evening, however, fever again rose high, and Mrs. Pyn-

sent felt that all hope was over, and that her patient must sink under its raging influence. Clara again demanded to see her father; and, from her excited state, Mrs. Pynsent deemed it prudent to acquiesce. Her exertions were the feverish and uncertain effects of a roused, though dying spirit, which would terminate fearfully and suddenly, when its strength should exhaust. When her father entered the chamber, Clara rose up in her bed, and extended her arms towards him. "Dear, good papa, you are come to see me"—her thoughts took another and more distressing direction; and her eyes, flashing with scorn, became gradually heavy and half-closed, as she spoke.

"Look at poor Clara, wedded to riches, and see her state *now!* Where is she? Where is Lady Kerrison, of Ripley? Where is the mother who sacrificed her child, and why does she not come to look upon me? Let her look—I am here, struck down—dying!" A copious hemorrhage succeeded the last words, and Clara never more spoke. Before Dr. Darwin returned to Ripley, Lady Kerrison was gone to her rest.

And this was the fate of Clara Wetheral! the young and beautiful Clara! Scarcely passed the bounds of childhood, her days were sacrificed to

the false light of ambitious hope, which, like the delusive Will-o'-the-wisp, led her only into the darkest and most impassable paths. Like the Will-o'-the-wisp, it lured her on, and deserted her in her hour of need. Few and evil were the married days of Clara. Her maid disclosed, at the death of her mistress, the secrets of the dead. Clara had habituated herself to the fatal influence of laudanum, upon every dissention with her husband; and she had endeavoured to drown the remembrance of her error, in potent and destroying libations. Her father remembered that she had alluded to the baneful practice, on the morning of his last visit.

Sir Foster Kerrison winked with more nervous rapidity than was her usual custom, when Mrs. Pynsent announced to him the death of his wife; but his mind appeared relieved by the knowledge that she would no more appear before him, to reproach and annoy. Mrs. Pynsent's remarks to Sir Foster, immediately after her announcement of the event, was either unheard or unheeded.

“Now you have killed two wives, you be quiet, and don't bring a woman to Ripley again, for they can't live in peace here. I wonder how you had the face to marry at all; but your first wife's family shut you up, and hid your coat, that you

mightn't be off on the wedding-day ; and we all know how the second wife was managed, so you are a poor thing, in spite of your temper. When the girls marry you in spite of yourself, be quiet and temperate, like Bobby."

Clara's funeral was attended by few, and it took place by torch-light, in the church of Ripley. Sir Foster sat perfectly quiet in his easy chair, and allowed Sir John Wetheral to superintend the arrangements of his lady's last removal from his home. He would not hear of any attendance, or indite an invitation to his friends ; but he followed the *cortège* to the church, and remained watching the workmen as they closed up the vault. The following day, Sir Foster was busily employed dragging the lake, with his servants.

Lady Wetheral had a severe illness upon her removal from Ripley, which threatened fatal consequences. Again, Mrs. Pynsent appeared as the good Samaritan, and assisted Christobelle in long and fatiguing watches. Sir John Spottiswoode also remained at Wetheral, and his attentions were very soothing to his friends. Christobelle feared lest Anna Maria should feel the constant absence of her mother-in-law, who daily visited Wetheral, and remained even through the night,

when her ladyship relapsed; but Mrs. Pynsent set aside all her fears. “Tom was left to take care of his wife and child, and poor Bobby, who was half another. Tom, God bless him! was like the Irishman’s bird—he could be in two places at once. She had great pleasure in being useful to her poor, dear, honest Bell, who got more kicks than halfpence from my lady, and come she would.”

Lady Wetheral recovered very slowly, but her spirits were severely depressed, and nothing appeared to give pleasure to her mind. The Boscawens came to Wetheral, upon Sir John’s departure, for it was thought their presence might rouse her attention. Isabel, truly happy in maternal cares, looked the picture of animated health, as Mr. Boscawen proudly and silently watched her erratic movements, and gloried in his lively, sweet-tempered wife. But her mother looked heavily and unconsciously upon the scene, and did not notice the gambols of her grandchild. Even the sight of Anna Maria failed to take effect upon her attention.

It was thought prudent to change the air and scene. By her medical attendant’s advice, Sir John resolved to quit, for some time, the scenes which brought the fate of her daughter before

her mental sight; and it was hoped a perfectly new situation, new people, and a complete change in every point, would effect a gradual restoration of her faculties and health. It was decided Lady Wetheral should spend two or three years at Fairlee. Scotland was remote from all recollections and painful reminiscence — there was nothing at Fairlie which could be connected with the departed; and, perhaps, among the grander scenery of the North, its bracing air, and novel inhabitants, Lady Wetheral might forget her banishment from the deathbed of the child who had reproached her as the cause of her bitter sufferings and untimely death. When her ladyship was able to leave her room without effort, the family set forth on their distant journey.

The Boscawens parted with Christobelle under many regrets, and they promised to join them at Fairlee, the ensuing year. Christobelle wept over her sisters — she wept over the little ones she must leave far behind — but her father was with her, and he would again be her companion, as he had been for thirteen years, in the happy tranquillity of Wetheral library. Mrs. Pynsent promised to correspond with Christobelle, and give her the news of the neighbourhood. She prophesied respecting Sir Foster Kerrison.

“That fellow will be run down again, in spite of his two wives dying. You may depend upon it, the fellow will be married again, without his own consent, or being consulted in the matter. The deuce was in the mothers!”

Mrs. Pynsent also winked her eye at Mr. Boscawen, and assured him, “Jacky Spottiswoode had an eye to Miss Bell — she could see *that*. Jacky would wait three or four years, and then pop. She thought my lady had another trial to endure; for she was not Pen Pynsent, if that poor Lady Ennismore came to good. What with the tartar Countess, that poor wizen Lord, and the fine-looking Colonel, Julia would be the next sacrifice;—every thing would come home to my Lady Wetheral.”

How Christobelle wept as she drove away from the scenes of her youth, and the hearts she loved! How Christobelle wept when she could see no more the woods of Wetheral Castle!

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